THE WIRE 309 | NOVEMBER 2009

WIRE

Julian Cope

Cornelius Cardew | Henry Threadgill
Peter Walker | Jim Jarmusch

00100 | Mordant Music
Bernie Krause

Bill Orcutt | Susan Stenger | Tanya Tagaq
Ian Penman on disco | William Bennett on Yoko Ono

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Adventures in Modern Music
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Julian Cope | Cornelius Cardew | Henry Threadgill | Peter Walker | Jim Jarmusch

Acoustic Ladyland *Living With A Tiger* CD
(Strong and Wrong)
Leading lights in the new breed of Punk Jazz crossover bands, Acoustic Ladyland venture further into skronk jazz and metal riffage with this glorious collection of new material housed in a well packaged digipack sleeve for fans of No Wave and violent genre cross pollinations.

Pelican *What We All Come To Need* CD
(Southern Lord)
As punishing as it is calming, What We All Come To Need is Pelican at their most inspired and sonically adept, delivering 50 minutes of weighty riffs and textured progressions in the momentous succession. This isn't maturation as much as it is confidence and purpose, and the latter are stamped on every note. Guests include Aaron Turner (ISIS) and Greg Anderson (SUNN)

Terror Danjah
***Gremlinz (The Instrumentals 2003-2008)* CD/3LP**
(Planet Mu)
Despite the pared down palette he uses Terror's productions are full of brilliant ideas, complex rhythms and pop hooks. The collection of his instrumentals, remixes and tracks for others is a good chance to show off his singular genius to the rest of the world.

Felix
***You Are The One That I Pick* CD/LP**
(Kranky)
Wondrous debut album of delicate and spare minimalist chamber pop from members of Stars Of The Lid and Lords.

Ben Frost
***By The Throat* CD/LP**
(Bedroom Community)
Mindblowing second full length for Bedroom Community. Where 'Theory of Machines' came sterilised in fluorescent light, BY THE THROAT is blood red and cloaked in shadow.

Klimek
***Movies Is Magic* CD**
(Anticipate Recordings)
Ambient pioneer Klimek is a regular contributor to Kompakt's superlative 'Pop Ambient' series. Large, picturesque settings produce emotionally compelling mini-narratives, while warm, unpretentious melodies balance with the multi-layered shadows that are expected from a Klimek album

DJ Magic presents *No Hats No Hoods vol.1* CD
(No Hats No Hoods)
Being responsible for aiding the launch of many of the Grime scenes biggest names through his legendary Dirty Canvas events, DJ Magic unleashes what has been called in many circles 'THE grime mix cd of the year' featuring 15 exclusive tracks and all the hottest spitters around, this visceral journey into one of the still most underground of genres is simply breathtaking

Melvins *Chicken Switch* CD
(Ipecac)
The masters of the absurdly heavy and heavily absurd allow others free to gnaw their back catalogue with terrifying results. Remixes from Merzbow, Lee Ranaldo (Sonic Youth), Panacea, Eye Yamatsuka (Boredoms), V/VM, [illegible], Sunroof! and more.

White Rainbow *Hate Clouds* CD/2LP
(Kranky)
Second Kranky full length album from Adam Forkner's sonic marathon. "Synthetic and digital but bulging with a skewed sort of primacy. And in embracing the more linear sides of both noise and beat driven electronics, Forkner has crafted an indelible and listenable psychedelic journey" ROCK A ROLLA

Shrinebuilder *Shrinebuilder* CD/2LP
(Neurot)
The debut album from this brand new band featuring Al Cisneros (OM, SLEEP), Wino (St VITUS, OBSESSED, HIDDEN HAND), Scott Kelly (Neurosis) and Dale Crover (MELVINS)
"If we were all given free reign to assemble a fictional dream supergroup, it's unlikely that any of us could have come up with something so mind-boggling and at the same time so appropriate as the conjunction of these four minds" - Rock-A-Rolla

Skepta *Microphone Champion* CD
(Boy Better Know)
[illegible] Skepta has been increasing his profile with a prolific output of consistent quality and a style [illegible] his own, [illegible] lyrically proficient and [illegible] the underground [illegible]

Talk Normal *Sugarland* CD/LP
(Rare Book Rooms)
NYC Duo's follow up to 2008's self released "Secret Cog" EP
"There are echoes of Lydia Lunch's [illegible] (Teenage Jesus And The Jerks) in the thumping, doomladen beat, the lyrics about [illegible] danger, and the [illegible] guitar [illegible] break up [illegible] bombs [illegible] abandoned warehouse" [illegible]

Fuck Buttons *Tarot Sport* Embossed CD/Embossed LP
(ATP Recordings)
Produced by Andrew Weatherall, 'Tarot Sport' is an album of unbound [illegible] and lucid cohesion, a [illegible] pilgrimage that refines, crafts, explores and develops the experimental aesthetic of last year's critically acclaimed debut, 'Street Horrrsing'.

Falty DL
***Bravery* CD/2LP**
(Planet Mu)
Falty DL, aka New York's Drew Lustman weighs in with these incredible new [illegible] 9/10 REVIEW [illegible] "A WIDESCREEN, HYBRIDISED PLATE OF 2 STEP, DUBSTEP AND ELECTRONICA WITH A HINT [illegible] YESTERYEAR REVERENCE [illegible] [illegible] BURIAL [illegible] POSSIBLY"

Giggs *Walk In Da Park* CD
(Spare no 1)
Undisputed leader [illegible] underground UK [illegible] displays a document [illegible] on Peckham living [illegible] millenium with the attendant [illegible] and [illegible] lonescape, [illegible] in [illegible] and vivid imagery. [illegible]

Ambarchi/Fennesz/Pimmon/Rehberg/Rowe
***Afternoon Tea* CD**
(Black Truffle)
An underground classic [illegible] released [illegible] and beautifully repackaged by Stephen O'Malley from SunnO))) [illegible] on Black Truffle with a new [illegible] bonus tracks and newly [illegible] live recordings [illegible]

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The Masthead

Cornelius Cardew, London, 1960

If a single demascene moment in John Tilbury's exhaustive, mostly magnificent 1000 page biography *Cornelius Cardew: A Life Unfinished (1936–1981)* marked the UK composer's conversion from middle class worrier to working class warrior, it got swept from my memory by the mass of detail, compellingly documented by Tilbury, of the endless squabbles that preoccupied the tiny British Maoist party to which he committed himself so wholeheartedly during the last decade of his life. Recruited to the cause by his former AMM colleague, guitarist Keith Rowe, he continued subjecting all his music to party demends long after Rowe had jumped ship.

Tragically, the music Cardew produced for the struggle advanced it not an inch. In his reassessment of his legacy (page 30), Philip Clark finds little positive to say about the music he composed according to the dictates of his Communist Party of England (Marxist-Leninist), be it his "crude faux-Beethovian socialist realism", or the dreadful "politburo-endorsed songs" like "Long Live Chairman Mao", "Smash The Social Contract" and "Revolution Is The Main Trend". Yet, Philip concludes, "If you find Cardew irreconcilably tainted by his political association, and *Treatise* of minor interest, the questions it raises – about the expressive burnout of conventional notation, and composer/performer hierarchies – remain central to any discussion of 'new music'."

Raising issues of control and freedom, the aforementioned 1960s graphic score *Treatise* resonates far more powerfully today as a tool of liberation for musicians than his political songs, which dismally failed to touch the hearts of the people they were intended to reach. Only the most absurdly caricatured class warriors would be able to recognise themselves in them. Unlike, say, the "*Mensch*" looking at themselves in the 20th century's most stirring leftist march song, Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler's "Einheitsfrontlied". *"Because man is a man/He needs something to eat – yes please!"* You couldn't get any more simple and direct, but more pertinently the song cuts right to the heart of the matter with the ironic, bordering on sarcastic inflection of that rising *"yes please!"*. The smile Brecht & Eisler's agitprop classic raises, verse after verse, gives it the immediate, enduring pop appeal that eluded Cardew's songs.

Who knows what Cardew would have made of this month's cover star Julian Cope including Mao (displaced as a guiding light by Enver Hoxha in Cardew's party) in a pantheon of 'prophets' to be scrutinised in a book – one of three that Cope is currently writing (see Rob Young's piece, page 40). Cope, Rob reports, "has worn his warrior's heart on his studded sleeve ever since his famous participation, dressed as the seven-foot potato-headed Squwubbsy – at the 1990 poll tax riots in London, and his desire to effect change – to unsettle himself as much as the nation – remains undimmed."

Elsewhere, in Letters (page 6), reader James Gardener takes us to task for dismantling Fuck Buttons' *Torot Sport* album for its lack of originality or subtlety, while neglecting to mention that "the record is a LOT OF FUN!". Thanks for the reminder, James. Fun has to be a significant factor. Any endeavour that can be so neatly tidied away into boxes to be ticked off and catalogued is far too joyless to truly serve any revolution, no matter where you're coming from. No one box is big enough to constrain the lust for life that fires Cope's enthusiasms. As for Cardew, he lost his right to party when he let party discipline drain the joy from his music.

Chris Bohn

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The Wire
23 Jack's Place, @Corbet Place, London E1 6NH, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 7422 5010
Fax: +44 (0)20 7422 5011
thewire.co.uk

Publisher
Tony Herrington tony@thewire.co.uk

Editor
Chris Bohn chris@thewire.co.uk
Deputy Editor
Anne Hilde Neset anne@thewire.co.uk
Reviews Editor
Derek Walmsley derek@thewire.co.uk
Editor-at-Large
Rob Young rob@tkewire.co.uk

Art Direction & Design
Ben Weaver art@tkewire.co.uk
Design
Patrick Ward patrick@thewire.co.uk

Advertising Manager
Andy Tait andy@thewire.co.uk
Licensing Manager & Advertising Sales
Shane Woolman shane@tkewire.co.uk
Advertising Production
Rich Lucas design@thewire.co.uk

Subscriptions & Administration
Ben House subs@thewire.co.uk

Special Projects, Listings & Subscriptions
Lisa Fanning lisa@thewire.co.uk

Web Editor
Susanna Glaser susanna@thewire.co.uk
Assistant Web Editor
Nathan Budzinski nathan@tkewire.co.uk

Archivist
Edwin Pouncey edwin@tkewire.co.uk

Words
Jennifer Allan, Steve Barker, Mike Barnes, Clive Bell, Marcus Boon, Michael Bracewell, Jon Bywater, Nick Cain, Philip Clark, Byron Coley, Julian Cowley, Alan Cummings, Sam Davies, Oman Dillon, Kodwo Eshun, Mark Fisher, Phil Freeman, Lonise Gray, Andy Hamilton, Simon Hampson, Owen Hatherley, Jim Haynes, Richard Henderson, Ken Hollings, Hua Hsu, David Keenan, Rakma Khazam, Elba Kopf, Alan Lickt, Dave Mandl, Brian Marley, Marc Masters, Bill Meyer, Keith Moliné, Will Montgomery, Brian Morton, Joe Muggs, Ian Penman, Edwin Pouncey, Simon Reynolds, Nick Richardson, Tom Ridge, Bruce Russell, Peter Shapiro, Chris Sharp, Pkilly Shutkmne, Nick Southgate, Daniel Spicer, Joseph Stannard, David Stubbs, Nick Sylvester, Dave Tompkins, David Toop, Dan Warburton, Val Wilmer, Barry Witherden, Matthew Wuethrich

Images
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steven.glynn@comag.co.uk

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USA
Forced Exposure
219 Medford St
Malden, MA 02148-7301
Fax: 781 321 9321
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Rest of World
Contact *The Wire* direct
Tel: +44 (0)20 7422 5022
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Courtesy The Drawing Room

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Each month *The Wire*'s website is updated with new and exclusive content. Here are some of the items that will be going up on the site this month:

- The unedited transcript of Rob Young's interview with **Julian Cope**
- An exclusive track by **William Bennett**
- Music and a gallery of graphic scores by **Cornelius Cardew**
- Music to illustrate this month's Global Ear from **Java**
- The unedited transcript of Hank Shteamer's interview with **Henry Threadgill**
- A new **Mordant Music** track
- Live footage of **Trembling Bells**

Jake Walters (Cope) Muir Vidler (Bennett)

The site's regular sections are updated on a daily, weekly or more ad hoc schedule. These include:

- **Adventures In Modern Music**
Each edition of *The Wire*'s show on Resonance 104.4 FM is archived on the site as a downloadable MP3 and stream. Recent editions of the show have featured interviews with **Kode9** and **Faust** recorded at Norway's Numusic festival, **Neil Hawks (Pressure Sounds)** live in the studio, plus a **Kosmische music** medley

- **The Archive**
Updated monthly: an ever-expanding library of articles culled from back issues of the magazine (many of which are now sold out)

- ***The Mire***
Updated whenever we feel like it. *The Wire* has a blog. Point your browsers to thewire.co.uk/themire for some extra-time musings on modern music matters from various staffers and contributors

- **The Portal**
Updated daily: our pick of the web with guest links from a host of outsider musicians and artists

- **The Conduit**
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- ***The Wire* Weekly**
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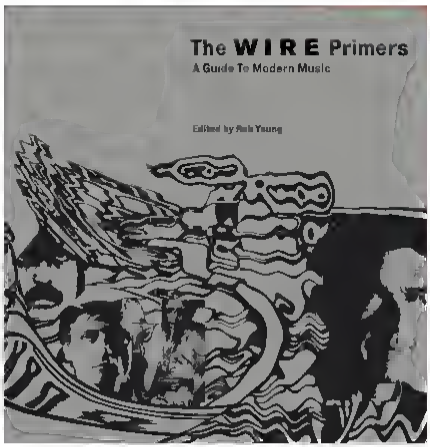
Follow what we are listening to in the office as we slave away producing yet another edition of your favourite alt. music zine

The Wire Primers
A Guide To Modern Music



The Wire Primers is a comprehensive guide to the core recordings of some of the most visionary and inspiring, subversive and radical musicians on the planet, past and present.

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Letters

Quick on the draw

Re *The Wire* 307. Yes, Caroliner are most wonderful; the weirdest band ever. The recordings and live concerts are two separate experiences, both amazing. I have attended many of their live performances. Attached is my depiction of a show at Cafe du Nord...San Francisco in 2008 [reproduced above]. My concert companions called my drawing "remarkably evocative and accurate".

Gage Kenady San Francisco, USA

Fuck art, let's dance

Derek Walmsley's review of Fuck Buttons' *Tarot Sport* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 308) was right on the money in terms of nailing its total lack of originality or subtlety. What the review failed to point out, however, is that in spite of, or maybe because of, these qualities, the record is a LOT OF FUN!

To these ears, Fuck Buttons go at their task of recreating the sound of the halcyon days of UK rave culture with such dumb enthusiasm that they totally carry the day. Listening to a track like the epic "Surf Solar", I felt I was being transported back to an anonymous field off the London orbital circa 1987, full of pilled up ravers, end with the sun, the drugs and the sound system all coming up at the same euphoric moment.

With that in mind, you might even claim the record as an example of that currently vogueish notion, hauntology, in the way the music sounds possessed by memories (real or handed down) of the last time dance music in the UK had any kind of political momentum or dimension. Admittedly, the political agenda began and ended with fighting for the right to party, but back in the late 80s, any initiatives that resisted the draconian social policies of the Thatcher administration were to be welcomed.

James Gardener via email

Good werk

Wow, I liked Mark Fisher's Kraftwerk review (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 308). It's the best review you have published since David Keenan wrote about Hair Police's *Certainty Of Swarms* (issue 296). That was great reviewing...all is forgiven (cf Letters, issue 308)!

Zenon Gradikowski via email

'Head on the block

In his review of the reissues of Radiohead's *Kid A* and *Amnesiac* (The Boomerang, *The Wire* 307), Nick Southgate revisits the rather reactionary us-against-them stance Ian Penman adopted when he first reviewed *Amnesiac* back in 2001 (*The Wire* 205). Back then Penman clearly distrusted these Johnny-come-lately stadium rockers and what they were doing with our music.

Firstly, Southgate states that these releases were initially "carefully marketed as 'difficult' albums as proof of Radiohead's artistic merit". I don't recall any such marketing – which would have been the province of the marketing department rather than the group anyway – but if his assertion is correct, Parlophone were dontbtless desperate for another big seller like *OK Computer* and were trying to make the best out of what they feared would be a bad job. (Lest we forget, *Kid A* hit the discount racks relatively soon after release.)

Southgate is sniffy about the group's "experimental credentials", but this is a meaningless phrase. Surely, by definition, anyone is being experimental when they attempt to push out beyond what they have already done. He then weighs in with the highly questionable assertion that "For their fans, the albums were indeed revelations". Then he goes on to write: "For seasoned adventurers in modern music the claim fell flat, raising a smile or sneer depending on temperament". Apart from being extraordinarily smug and patronising, Southgate never actually explains why Radiohead's music is so deserving of being mocked.

Pity then the poor saps – myself among them – who were dumb enough to be impressed by these Radiohead albums, while that hip cognoscenti, the 'adventurers in modern music', looked down on them and sniggered. This setting up of *The Wire* against the 'normals' who like "conventional" music...as Southgate puts it...is the sort of lazy, taken-as-read elitism the magazine mercifully steers clear of as a rule. Hopefully it will continue to do so.

David Forbes, Wood via email

Corrections

Issue 308. A number of errors crept into the information on *The Wire Tapper 22* CD. "Saiya (Wire Tapper edit)" by Tomoyoshi Date & Corey Fuller (with Tadahito Ichinoseki) was not recorded as "part of an ongoing project called *Intimations Of Immortality*"; this title is actually the name of the album from which an edit of the track in question was taken. The poem on the same track was read by Tadahito Ichinoseki (who also wrote it), not Tomoyoshi Date. In the notes to Clang Sayne's "A Death And A Vision", Laura Hyland was described as being British; she is in fact Irish. In the notes to angkorwat's "Big/Little Edie", Niamh aka angkorwat, was described as being a "he" when she is definitely a "she".

In the Rashied Ali obituary, the Peter Brotzmann album *Songlines* featured Fred not Ben, Hopkins.

Write to: Letters, *The Wire*, 23 Jack's Place, 6 Corbet Place, London E1 6NN, UK, fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, letters@thewire.co.uk

Next month in the December issue of *The Wire*

310

King Crimson by Joseph Stannard

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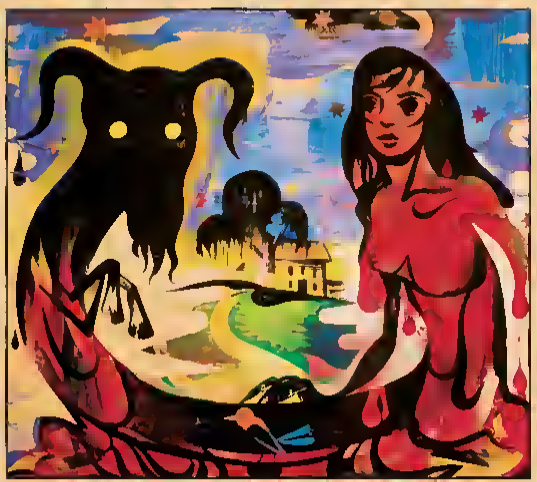

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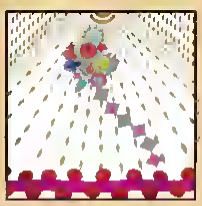

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News from under the radar. Compiled by **Nick Richardson**

Funky strut: Fela Kuti

The complete recordings of **Fela Kuti** are to be reissued by New York's Knitting Factory Records. The series begins with the career-spanning completion *The Best Of The Black President* which includes DVD footage of performances at Glastonbury and the Berlin Jazz Festival, as well as excerpts from the 1982 documentary *Music Is The Weapon*. Over the next year and a half Fela's entire back catalogue will be released, making the recordings available in America on vinyl for the first time. The releases coincide with the opening of *Fela!* on Broadway, a musical by Bill T Jones and Jim Lewis about the Afrobeat pioneer's life. knittingfactory.com

On 21 November the city of Linz, Austria, will observe **No Music Day**. Shops won't play music, nor will churches, cinemas won't play films with musical soundtracks, the local radio will broadcast only talk shows. It's part of the 2009 European Capital of Culture's Hörstadt (Acoustic City) initiative which aims to heighten awareness of the city's acoustic properties by eliminating imposed noise, and refine the experience of the Akustikon, a sound art installation in the city centre. nomusicday.com, hoerstadt.at

Composer, inventor and dulcimer virtuoso **Geoff Smith** unveils his new instrument this month: the Fluid Piano, a keyboard that allows for precise, microtonal retuning before and during performance. In development for several years, the keyboard is Smith's attempt to liberate the piano from the limitations of Western classical tuning. The launch event takes place on 28 November at Surrey University in Guildford, and features live performances of specially composed works for Fluid Piano by Matthew Bourne, Nikki Yeoh and Pam Chowhen.

Somewhat improbably, Digital Hardcore label pioneer and founding member of Atari Teenage Riot, **Alec Empire**, is to perform with **Merz Almond** next month. Empire joins the former Soft Cell frontman onstage with Patrick Wolf at Wolf's London Palladium show on 15 November. Almond has a history of unlikely collaborations – he has previously worked with JG Thirlwell, Coil and Lydia Lunch, among others. His latest album, *Orpheus In Exile*, a collection of Russian songs by Vadim Kozin, was released in September.

Turntablist **Roc Reide** died on 19 September, aged 37, from complications following a back injury sustained during martial arts training. Born Anthony Williams, Raida was one of the most technically accomplished turntablists of all time. Catapulted to fame after his victory at the 1995 DMC World DJ Championship, he released six solo albums plus seven more as part of The X-cutioners (originally known as The X-Men). He worked with Ghostface Killah and Big L among others, and was Busta Rhymes's personal DJ.

The Montreal-based electronic music festival **MUTEK** is looking for contributors. "Artists and projects that... strive to push the boundaries of digital and electronic creativity" are invited to submit proposals and recordings of their performances to the Mutek board for possible inclusion in the 2010 edition of the festival – they welcome live acts, multimedia projects and audiovisual performances. Submissions can be made by email to submissions@mutek.org, or by snail mail to Submission 2010, c/o MUTEK, 473 Boulevard Saint-Joseph Est, Montréal H2J 1J8, Canada. mutek.org

The English Folk Dance and Song Society are hosting a day of events at Cecil Sharp House in London to celebrate the life and work of influential folk guitarist **Davy Graham**. Artists confirmed to play thus far include Martin Carthy, Ralph McTell, Wizz Jones and Sam Carter. Graham, whose acoustic fingerpicking revolutionised guitar playing in the early 1960s, died of lung cancer late last year. Davy Graham: A Life In Celebration takes place on 28 November. efdss.org

The British Library are putting their entire sound archive online, free of charge. The collection of over 28,000 recordings includes music and field recordings from around the world, as well as some of the earliest recordings ever made, such as those made by British anthropologist Alfred Cort Haddon who documented the singing of the Torres Strait Aborigines on wax cylinders in 1898. sounds.bl.uk

After 25 years of business, the **Mode** label, a renowned outlet for contemporary composition and a source for dozens of important John Cage and Iannis Xenakis recordings, is struggling in the recession. To help weather the storm they're organising a benefit concert to take place at the Abrons Centre in New York on 21 November. Details of the line-up have yet to be released but we're told to expect "everything (and anything) from John Cage to John Zorn". moderecords.com

Steely of groundbreaking dancehall production team Steely & Clevie, died on 1 September, aged 47, from a heart attack. Born Wycliffe Johnson in Trenchtown, Kingston, he was originally a keyboardist, playing on sessions at Lee Perry's Black Ark before going on to become a key member of The Roots Radics session group. In 1988 he and his friend Cleveland "Clevie" Browne became the in-house production team at King Jammy's studio where they began to experiment with digital techniques. They produced tracks for Reggie Stepper, Cutty Ranks and many others. The Poco Man Jam rhythm, the basis for Shabba Ranks's "Dem Bow", is widely acknowledged as kickstarting reggaeton.

Sunn O))) have released the dates for their 2009 UK tour, their first for three years. They kick off in Glasgow on 6 December and end up at Koko in London with DM a week later. The duo of Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson will be joined onstage by Attila Csihar, former vocalist of Hungarian Black Metal cult favourites Mayhem, and multi-instrumentalist Steve Moore. A one-off performance by the Grevetemple trio of O'Malley, Csihar and Dren Ambarchi is also due to take place at London's ICA on 16 November. southernlord.com

Columbia and Legacy Records are putting out a new box set retrospective of all the music **Miles Davis** recorded while at Columbia. The package includes 70 CDs, a 250 page biography of Miles with detailed discography, a DVD of the Miles Davis Quintet live in Stockholm and Karlsruhe in 1967 with the line-up of Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams, plus the first ever complete audio document of Miles's performance at the Isle of Wight festival in 1970. *Miles Davis: The Complete Columbia Album Collection* is available from 24 November uniquely from Amazon. amazon.co.uk

A new website for vinyl fetishists, **Vinyl Lives**, was launched in September. It features monthly interviews with independent record store owners, as well as pages devoted to the history of record stores and vinyl pressing. vinylives.com

John Lydon is to resurrect the **PiL** name for a series of gigs. The line-up features guitarist Lu Edmonds and drummer Bruce Smith in lieu of Jah Wobble and Keith Levene, plus multi-instrumentalist Scott Firth, and they will play five UK dates between 15 and 21 December, starting in Birmingham and ending up at the Brixton Academy in London. The post-punk unit has not played a show for 17 years.

The Jazzatelier venue in Ulrichsberg, Austria is to host a three-day event in December celebrating the 60th birthday of the pioneering free jazz drummer **Paul Lovens**. Titled Phonomanie, the event will feature performances by many of the musicians Lovens has worked with over the last four decades, including Mats Gustafsson, Paul Lytton, Radu Malfatti, Klaus Filip, John Russell, Eugene Chadbourne, John Edwards, Phil Wachsmann, Alexander von Schlippenbach, Evan Parker and more. It all happens at the Ulrichsberg Jazzatelier between 4–8 December. jazzatelier.at/va/pho09.htm

Taschen are publishing a new book on **Alex Steinweiss**, the graphic artist who revolutionised record sleeve design in the 1940s, and the subject of DJ Spooky's Inner Sleeve in *The Wire* 306. The book collects the bold sleeves Steinweiss created for Columbia, London, Decca and Everest Records, as well as his advertising campaigns and film title sequences. In addition to its regular print run, the book, *Steinweiss: Inventor Of The Modern Album Cover*, is available in a limited art edition with serigraph print. taschen.com

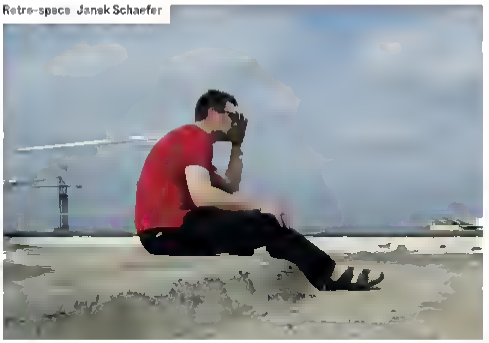
Next month sees the final events in the **Warp** label's ongoing 20th anniversary celebrations with two nights at Berlin's Berghain venue featuring Battles, Nice Nice, Gravenhurst and !!! DJs (4 December), and Hudson Mohawke vs Rustie, Plaid, Andrew Weatherall, Clark, Jackson and Tim Exile (11). Another all-nighter, at London's

Coronet on 5 December, will feature Battles, Broadcast, Plaid and more. warp.net

New York's The Drawing Center is due to stage an exhibition dedicated to the work of the Greek composer **Iannis Xenakis**. Subtitled Composer, Architect, Visionary, the exhibition will be the first in North America to be dedicated to Xenakis's original works on paper with scores, architectural drawings, conceptual renderings and more, all dating from 1953–54. The exhibition runs from 15 January–8 April. drawingcenter.org

A retrospective of the work of sound artist **Janek Schaefer** opens on 5 December at the Bluecoat Gallery in Liverpool. The exhibition takes over six of the gallery's spaces and features a new commission entitled *National Portrait*, an installation based around cut-up sound taken from 24 hours' worth of television broadcast in Liverpool. Till 17 January. audioh.com/projects/nationalportrait.html

Video artist **Peer Bode**, son of the renowned instrument builder Harald Bode, has revealed the technical plans of one of his father's greatest creations, the Bode Melochord. This early electronic instrument built in 1947, was purchased by the Westdeutscher Rundfunk for Stockhausen, and used by various other WDR composers including György Ligeti and Herbert Eimert. Bode Jr is looking for a programmer to write an emulator of the Melochord and for composers interested in reworking sound files from the Bode Archive. Interested parties should contact Andrew Deutsch at adeutschinfoblvd.net


Retro-space: Janek Schaefer

New pay-per-view video channel **Realeyz.tv** has several films programmed that may appeal to readers of *The Wire*, including *The Monks: The Transatlantic Feedback*, on the legendary US GIs turned garage band that rocked 1960s West Germany; Shirley Clarke's *Ornette: Made In America*; *Totally Wired*, a documentary about the Schneiders Büro instrument store in Berlin; *Escape From Luanda*, by Phil Grabsky, about a music conservatory in Angola and the clash between traditional Angolan music and the Western classical tradition; and *Video Out* about video DJing. realeyz.tv

To celebrate the fifth anniversary of their Don't Look Back concert series, **ATP** are putting on two bumper shows at London's Hammersmith Apollo in May 2010. On 2 May Suicide will be playing their first LP in full, and on 3 May The Stooges, who played the first Don't Look Back show ever, will be playing their 1973 album *Raw Power*. These will be the first Stooges shows with James Williamson, guitarist on the original recording, in over 35 years. atpfestival.com

Ryoji Ikeda's first UK exhibition, data.tron, opens this month at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham. The Japanese sound artist also premieres his audiovisual work *datamotics [ver.2.0]* at Birmingham's CBSO Centre on 24 November. ryojiikeda.com

The latest manifestation of the bizarre ongoing trend for portable loop players (see also FM3's Buddha Machine and Flingco Sound System's new Black Box) is **Gristleism** – The Throbbing Gristle Handheld Loop Playback Machine. A collaboration between TG and FM3 member Christiaan Virant. It features 13 original Throbbing Gristle loops and comes in black chrome or red. gristleism.com

On The Wire, the eclectic dub-driven Radio Lancashire show of *The Wire*'s own Steve Barker, has celebrated its 25th anniversary with a special edition. One of the longest running independent music shows in UK radio history, *On The Wire* has featured everything from reggae to gospel to early Acid House over the years. The anniversary show on 19 September featured mixes from Kode9, DJ Pinch, Mick Sleeper and TurnTableTerrorist, and is archived at otwradio.blogspot.com

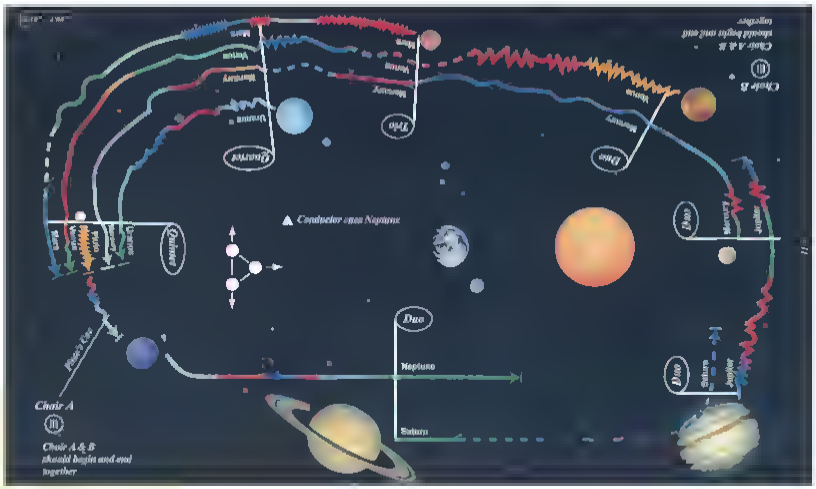
Owing to "extreme personal issues", **Lou Reed** cancelled what was to be the first European tour by his group Metal Machine Trio. The shows were scheduled to take place in October. Refunds have been promised for ticket holders, and Reed has hinted at a return to Europe at a later date. loureed.com

Onement is a new record label run by Paris based musician Sylvain Chauveau, producing vinyl records in limited editions of... one. Each record is unique, and they promise the pressings will not be repeated so even the composer won't get a copy. The first instalment is by Robert Hampson, with Antti Rannisto and Keith Rowe to follow. onement-label.com

Trip Or Squeek

By Savage Pencil

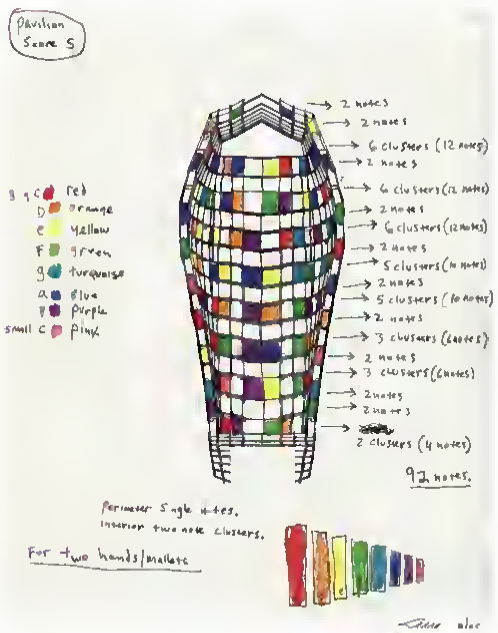
Bites



Martin Sebastian Leyatz *Celestial Spheres Fantasy For Improvisers* (2005)

Cathy Berberian *Stripsody* (1966)

Notations 21
Stretching the score



Steve Roden *Pavilion Score 5* (2005)

Notations 21 has just landed with a resounding thud onto bookshelves and coffee tables. Its editor, American musicologist Theresa Sauer, has updated John Cage & Allson Knowles's 1973 book *Notations*, exploring the developments in graphical scoring in the intervening period. Presenting 290 scores by 165 composers including Steve Reich, Marina Rosenfeld, Stockhausen, Stephen Vitiello, Phill Niblock, Robert Ashley, it's a visual bacchanalia of marginal revelry. At points it nudges against Fluxus influences with Irish composer Jennifer Walshe's *THIS IS WHY PEOPLE OD ON PILLS/AND JUMP FROM THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE*, an instruction for a soloist or group, where performers must learn to skateboard to participate. Michael J Schumacher's binary scores are reductionist circuit diagram abstraction, while at the other end of the spectrum, Gary Noland's expressive outsider art illustrations present an amusement park of musical possibilities.

Sauer asserts, "The role of graphic notation in the world today is to broaden communication between composer, performer and listener. When Western notation was first developed, the composer was concerned about creating a symbol to represent a sound. Composers still have that viewpoint, but now have seen many more possibilities. They have ideas about collaboration, intuition, imagination, improvisation, time, and space, stretching the limits of what we can communicate in symbols."

With software notation applications such as Sibelius, which are able to translate every symbolic gesture on a computer keyboard into a musical note, handwritten scores have gone the way of snail mail for many composers. The often evasive, oblique images and scores displayed in the book may well be a reaction against computerised notation, and offer an open place for performers, in particular, to interpret and engage afresh with a score. Those featured here present possibilities, potentials, a conduit towards provocative performances in the present and future. As Sauer suggests, "*Notations 21* gives just a hint at what that new reality is, and where all music will eventually move. It has to if we are to communicate creatively on a global scale." ☐ Theresa Sauer's *Notations 21* is published this month by Mark Batty Publisher.

Robin Rimbaud

Performa 09

Atrocity exhibition

Mike Kelley (right) with Destroy All Monsters

"I don t believe there is such a thing as No se mnsic Noise is a relative term And since avant garde practices are now subsumed into popular music it really doesn t make any sense to define the kinds of sounds associated with them as Noise," writes artist Mike Kelley from his base in Los Angeles when asked about his role as a curator for a Noise festival within New York City s Performa Biennial The resulting event Fantastic Worlds Superimposed On Reality (A Select History Of Experimental Mnsic) consists of, in Kelley s own words "a subjective selection of 20th century avant garde improvisational and rock-oriented Noise music Works were drawn from both the realms of music and art My desire was to present works, or artists that predate the adoption of the general term Noise music – before Noise became completely enveloped into popular music and there was still some kind of tie to the original notion of an avant garde " His own psychedelic Noise troupe Destroy All Monsters mark the finale of the two day jamboree which includes Steve Reich s *Pendulum Music* (1968) performed by Alex Waterman and guests and further sets by Rodney Graham Thurston Moore & Ryan Sawyer, z'ev Arto Lindsay, Jad Fair & Lumberob Shelley Hirsch & Christian Marclay John Zorn Genesis Breyer P-Orridge John Duncan and Joan La Barbara

The biennial is dedicated to new visual art performance and for the first time it includes a large chunk of live music On the day of the New York Marathon, Arto Lindsay will lead an alternative procession featuring more than 50 performers marching through the streets using mobile phones as instruments and according to the organisers, "carrying large screens that will receive projections invisible to the naked eye"

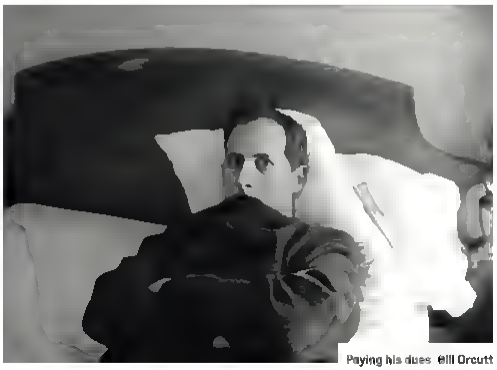
A commemoration of 100 years of Futurism is placed high on the agenda *Vita Futurista* (1916) is reimagined in a new film *Futurist Life Redux*, made by a host of video artists including Martha Colburn George Kuchar and Aida Rnilova For the performance Mnsic For 16 Futurist Noise Intoners, artists have made original scores for specially built intonarumori (Luigi Russolo s noise intoners) – Blixa Bargeld John Butcher Luciano Chessa Pauline Oliveros Mike Patton Anat Pick Elliott Sharp and Jennifer Walshe with Tony Conrad have composed pieces for these intonarumori

In another premiere Mike Kelley is staging the performance piece *Day Is Done Judson Church* which promises to bring his video installation *Day Is Done* a feature length 'musical' from 2005, to life In it is a vignette, *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #33 (Ladder Piece)* involving 13 people assembled on and around a large ladder playing music on horns

"I grew up during the psychedelic period and discovered avant garde and electronic music through rock music that had links to it," Kelley explains "Detroit where I was raised had a rich music scene in the late 60s and early 70s and I was exposed to a lot of different kinds of music I was particularly inspired by free jazz especially Sun Ra and The Art Ensemble Of Chicago In fact, one of the reasons I was drawn to the field of art was my understanding of a relationship between avant garde music and visual art," he declares "Luigi Russolo's *Art Of Noises* [the Futurist manifesto from 1913] had an immense impact on ma when I read it as a teenager I never had access to music training so the non-traditional sound approaches of dada, Futurism and Fluxus which were art-related and not music-related genres, allowed me the freedom to make mnsic based on ideas rather than instrumental prowess " ☐ Performa 09 takes place in various venues in New York City between 1–22 November performa-arts.org

Anne Hilde Neset

Courtesy Performa (Kelley)



Paying his dues Bill Orcutt

Bill Orcutt

Return of the lone shark

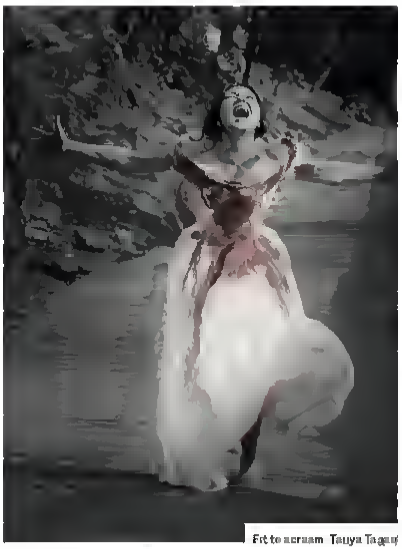
Since their demise in 1997, Harry Pussy's reputation as the most extreme exponents of post-hardcore avant rock has become unassailable "I know that some people still like the band," guitarist Bill Orcutt shrugs "Reminds me of the line from *Chinatown* about time making politicians, ugly buildings and whores respectable " After the split, drummer Adris Hoyos remained semi-active alongside her husband Graham Lambkin as part of the collective gathered around Scott Foust's Anti-Naturals banner, before retiring to look after her new family Orcutt, however, seemed to disappear from the map altogether

But with the release of a Harry Pussy retrospective on Load, and first a single and now a self-released solo album, Orcutt has suddenly re-entered the spotlight "Since 1997 I've lived in San Francisco where I work as a software engineer," he reveals "I'm married and have a couple of kids I wasn't disillusioned or uninspired with music – even when I wasn't playing I was an avid fan, but at that point it was time to give it a rest. Putting together the Harry Pussy compilation on Load got me interested in playing again. I hadn't heard any of that material in over a decade, and it was inspiring to hear it after so long."

Orcutt's solo album, *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*, sees him switch from electric to acoustic guitar, transferring his hyper-kinetic style to a more wailing, blues based format "I'm playing an old Kay acoustic with a vintage DeArmond pickup," he explains "It's essentially Elmore James's rig Sounds good to me particularly for playing unaccompanied. I've had it since I was a teenager " But where did that playing style come from? "The biggest influence on my playing was being in a band with Adris and trying to find a way to play with her that wouldn't turn her into Meg White, who didn't exist yet, but maybe you know what I mean."

Orcutt will soon play in Brighton with UK free jazz drummer Paul Hession. "I'm a total fan of Hession, ' he says, "and I'm psyched that we're playing together." But will Harry Pussy ever play again? "I have no idea " At least that s not a no ☐ *A New Way To Pay Old Debts* is out on Palilalia. Bill Orcutt plays at Brighton's Colour Out Of Space festival this month see Out There

David Keenan



Fit to scream Tanya Tagaq

Tanya Tagaq

Heavy breather

Tanya Tagaq can be a tricky individual to get hold of. A resident of the extreme north of Canada, she was born and raised in Cambridge Bay in the Inuit territory of Nunavut, well inside the Arctic Circle. With winter temperatures of 30 degrees below zero, it's a barren and remote place – and don't even think about phone coverage. But, remarkably, the 32 year old vocalist's unique throat-singing style has communicated far enough to lead to collaborations with major figures including Björk and The Kronos Quartet.

Her art owes a lot to the extreme environment she grew up in. Her debut CD, 2005's *Sinaa*, was an investigation into an ancient form of Inuit throat-singing that explicitly seeks to emulate the sounds of those wild lands – multitracked rhythmic chants of guttural growls and gasps, shrill trills and ululations evoking wind and rock, tooth and claw. There's more than a hint of the shamanic about the recording, with Tagaq immersed in a spontaneous, transformative act of channelling. Speaking by phone from the relative civilisation of Yellowknife – a mere 250 miles below the Arctic Circle – she explains the process. "It's exercise. It's like going for a run but also doing maths. It's kind of a challenge all round – physically, mentally and spiritually. I have no control over what happens when I'm singing. I'm not trying to control it or harness anything – it just happens."

For those not used to it, her vocalisation can sound fierce, even aggressive, but it's actually based on a traditional Inuit game played for fun by pairs of women singing at each other, trading rhythms and vibrations until one or both collapse from laughter or exhaustion. Maybe there's a hint of this in Tagaq's fondness for collaboration. "It's like making a painting and other people have the colours you don't have," she explains. While *Sinaa* included a duet with Björk, last year's follow-up, *Auk*, widened her roster of vocal collaborators to include Mike Patton and her fellow Canadian, the rapper Buck 65. It also signalled a change to her sound, moving away from largely unaccompanied vocals to a more orchestrated palette incorporating strings, electronics and beats. Some might say that these more polished recent recordings lack the earthy vitality of her debut – but it's clear Tagaq is an artist in flux, with a hunger to experiment and make new connections. "I'd like to try maybe some Heavy Metal, like Speed Metal or something. Or maybe Tom Waits," she says. "I most likely won't end up writing pop ballads or anything. There's just a neverending stream of what I could do."

Next on her schedule is an appearance this month at the first London International Festival of Exploratory Music, which brings together diverse international acts including Israel's Mabrouk Band, playing a mix of Sephardic, Balkan and Arabic music; minimalist indie pop from Beijing's Lovely China Day; and the European premiere of Brazilian favela-funk collective Coletivo Rádio Cipó. ☐ Tanya Tagaq appears at LIFEM on 5 November – see Out There. lifem.org.uk

Daniel Spicer

Unofficial Channels:

Free Improvisation

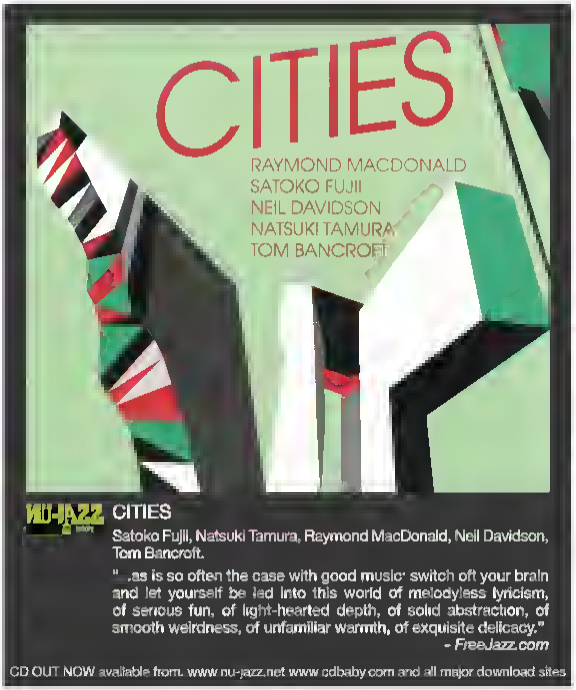
As improvised music has just about recovered from being dragged into the digital age, its practitioners and proprietors have embraced the internet as a platform for distributing music. For financial, logistical and political reasons, finished music is increasingly being offered for free consumption. Benedict Drew's *A Folding Table* album, released at benedictdrew.com, quickly attracted more listeners than any CD release might have been capable of. It came complete with artwork and was offered at a CD quality bitrate. This last factor is crucial. While many improv musicians long gave up hope of making money from CDs, the unpredictable quality of illegal downloads remains a bugbear. The falling cost of setting up a website gives musicians a quick and simple way of getting music out there on their own terms, and with more listeners comes more invitations to play live – the preferred reward for many improvising musicians. Others offering finished works for free include Mattin, whose entire wmo/r and Dexetea labels are available for free at mattin.org, and Vienna based laptopper Tim Blechmann, who offers a number of complete recordings from tim.klugt.org. Both contribute to klugt.org, a communal resource used by many improvisors to make music available for free.

Net labels offering free improv downloads are springing up by the day. The cream of them includes homophoni.com, a label with the simple philosophy of presenting only the best music they can find – effectively a normal label without the physical objects and with just as much attention paid to the visual presentation of the work. In the UK, compostandheight.com covers improv and creative field recording and makes quality new music available at quite a rate.

Unsurprisingly, few CD labels have made the move to digital-only releases, but taking a copyleft stance, labels like taumaturgia.com and unreveu.free.fr have made new CD releases simultaneously available as free downloads. The former recently released a superb recording by Radu Malfatti and Taku Unami, the latter an excellent first solo by double bassist Guillaume Viltard.

A few musicians have begun to explore the potential of the internet in a different manner. Benedict Drew, Paul Abbott and Seymour Wright have chosen to document their every get-together online. Their suspended-pole-holds-tree.tumblr.com site contains an archive of their informal playing sessions, alongside drawings and even photos of what the trio had for lunch. The downloadable format means that the musicians do not have to worry about creating something that fits neatly on a CD. Perhaps through this project a glimpse of the future can be found. ☐

Richard Pinnell



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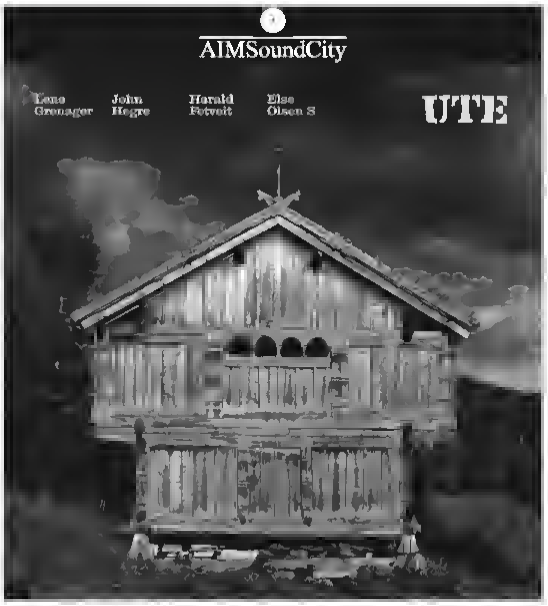

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OOIOO

By David Hickey

OOIOO (left to right): Kayan, Yoshimi, Aya, Ai

It has been an eventful few months in the life of Yoshimi. Earlier in the year she gave birth to her second child; since then she has soundtracked the summer's solar eclipse aboard a Russian ferry off Japan's southern coast; and in September she played All Tomorrow's Parties in New York backed by a supporting cast of eight drummers. Those musical endeavours were as a member of Yoshimi's best known group Boredoms, with whom she has been creating planet-quaking rhythms now for nearly half her life. But the occasion for our conversation by email from her countryside home – situated, she says, "at the foot of some quite holy mountains" in Nara, western Japan – is the new album by her group OOIOO. She formed the all-female unit on a whim in 1995, when a Japanese music magazine wanted to feature her and she asked some friends to come along because she disliked the idea of being photographed alone. *Armonica Hewa* is their sixth album, the first in more than three years, and it sounds nothing like Boredoms.

The album's title is a Spanish and Swahili amalgam that translates along the lines of 'air in a harmonious state' which gives some indication of the polyglot sounds contained within – literally in some cases, with vocals that appear to be sung in various tongues. Yoshimi says she has been listening to Hungarian, Inuit and Ainu female choral music, but also cites The Raincoats and The Shaggs. At times the multitracked harmonies sound like nonsensical variations on the group's name. Pronounced oh-oh-eye-oh-oh, it was chosen simply because Yoshimi thought the binary aesthetic would make it easy for design. Playful, raucous and confident – it's the first OOIOO album to feature the same line-up as its predecessor – *Armonica Hewa* synthesizes indigenous music, No Wave, highlife and much else besides, before finishing with a reworking of the hitherto little-heralded 1980 Turkish bubblegum disco tune "Honki Ponki" – a song Yoshimi recalls she first tried singing at home at the age of six. "We didn't have any particular objective for this album," the 41-year-old explains. "I think starting like that would be a waste of time. Only by playing live together as we record, performing instinctively, do I figure out what the concept of the album is going to be."

Like OOIOO's previous releases, *Armonica Hewa* was built from the rhythm up, with Yoshimi the central axis around which the three other members form a centrifuge that sometimes seems in danger of spinning out of control. Once she's convened bassist Aya and drummer Ai to an Osaka rehearsal space, says Yoshimi, the trio lay down the tribal-infused polyrhythms to each song "more or less live", at the same time as Aya's bass parts – sometimes scattershot, sometimes outrageously funky – which on first listen bear little resemblance to the din around them. "We'll then change the speed and the structure of the songs, basically on impulse," adds Yoshimi, after which Ai records further percussion, and Kayan – based, like Ai and Aya, in Tokyo – lays down her guitar parts. Yoshimi then remixes the results and records the overdubs, including her own guitar and keyboard parts. "After that I'll get in front of the mic and just sing whatever excites me."

This scrap-and-build, trial-and-error approach to recording may echo that of Boredoms, but its roots can be found in the group's amateur beginnings. Although a veteran of the Osaka Noise scene, having joined Yamataka Eye's pre-Boredoms No Wave trio UFO Or Die as drummer in 1986, Yoshimi had never picked up the guitar before forming OOIOO. Nor had two of the other founding members (since departed) ever played their instruments either. Hence for their first live shows, supporting Sonic Youth on a 1997 Japan tour (Yoshimi was by this time already drumming in Kim Gordon's Free Kitten), Yoshimi and then guitarist Kyoko navigated their way around the fretboard with sticker aids. The final founding member, Ai, is the exception to this rule. Ai also performs as OLAibi, a hypnotic percussion unit whose instrumentation includes conga, kalimba and bougerabeo. Such pan-international grooves have informed OOIOO's music since their 1997 debut *Eight*, and lend *Armonica Hewa* its rich, joyous atmosphere. At times Ai has reconfigured her drum kit to accommodate her tastes, dumping the snare drum for the djembe, the floor tom for congas.

It's tempting to think OOIOO's use of African percussion such as the djembe, made from natural materials and once used in rituals to worship the gods, as part of the group's own questing take on primitivism. "If the band represents one country, then I represent just one of its tribes," Yoshimi says. Probed on whether she feels any kind of devotion to a higher power, she remarks: "I think that God exists in nature. I'm not interested in religion but I have faith." But she hesitates when asked outright if she is a spiritual person. "I don't really know what that means. I think people who are 'spiritual' need to take care to make sure that [their beliefs] don't blind them."

As for a new Boredoms release, it won't surprise anyone to learn that the group have recorded masses of material, none of which they're yet willing to make public. "I want to start making a new album soon if the circumstances are right," Yoshimi says. "Up until now we've created lots of sounds, but we discard them almost immediately. I ask myself why, because all we end up doing is recording it again." ☐ *Armonica Hewa* is out now on Thrill Jockey.

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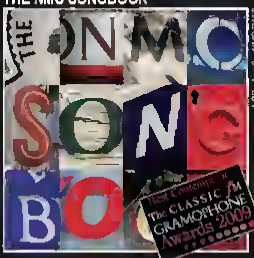

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Mordant Music

By Joseph Stannard

EXORCISE

With its prominent sampling of British Public Information Films and continuity provided by veteran TV announcer Philip Elsmore, Mordant Music's 2006 debut album *Dead Air* swiftly aligned the then-duo of Baron Mordant aka Ian Hicks and Admiral Greyscale aka Gary Mills with the emergent hauntology axis alongside Ghost Box and Trunk Records. Yet if that debut was a highly effective evocation of Weird Britishness, it owed a great deal more to Peter Greenaway's *The Tulse Luper Suitcases* and apocalyptic BBC drama *Threads* than to the genteel witchery of Arthur Machen and *The Owl Service*. With their recent single "The Hauntological Song", they appeared to be cocking a snook at their perceived allies, although it would be spurious to suggest that some kind of hauntological beef is in the offing, especially given surviving Mordant Music member Hicks's recent involvement in *The Wire*'s New Realms Of The Uncanny event in London in October, alongside Broadcast and The Caretaker.

Nevertheless, Hicks is careful to point out that *Dead Air* represented a single facet of the Mordant mindset, one which now appears to have been exorcised. "MM has always existed in the present," he states via email in his trademark modified syntax. "The 'now' tape is running and has an unavoidable presence in MMy routines... "The Hauntological Song" was just so ripe for the picking in truth... a Mordant curveball... the opening bars of Supertramp's "The Logical Song" have tripped me up a few times since childhood so I didn't feel at all cynical by glazing it with some parquet... *Dead Air* propelled MM onto the haunted carousel completely by chance so there's never been a reaction towards 'hauntology' either Wayans... stylistically I don't believe that MM is set in any particular stone... bauxite maybe..."

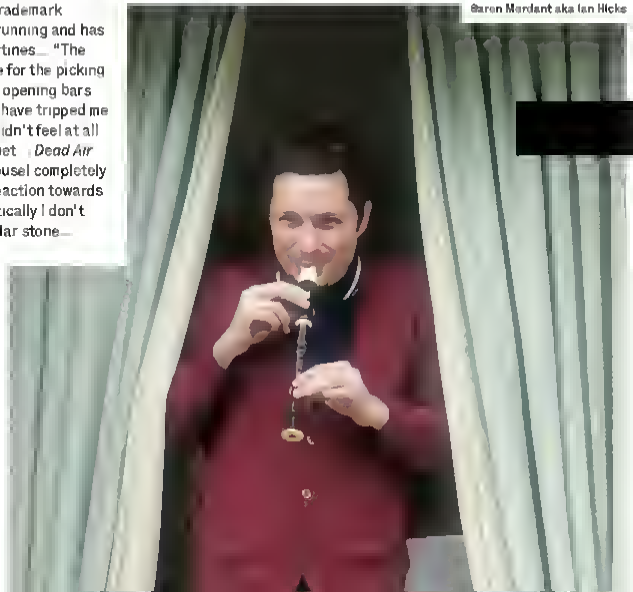
This mutability – which enables Hicks to move between dubstep austerity, Kosmische arpeggios and electro terseness – is borne out by recent tracks such as "24 Million Or Sell Neverland", "Hummdrumm" and new album *SyMptoMs*. Being the work of the Baron, *SyMptoMs* shares an identifiably Mordant atmosphere with *Dead Air*, but that's about it. Whereas the debut was notable for its meticulous layering of hundreds of samples, the follow-up is leaner, cleaner and significantly less cluttered. *SyMptoMs* is also notable for the dominating presence of Hicks's own voice. *Dead Air*'s penultimate track "Fallen Faces", a vocal-led electro-punk banger in sharp contrast to its surroundings, was the anomaly on an album that relied for the most part on external sources to provide its human element. This time around, the exception is the rule, with tracks such as "SyMptoMs" and "Hey, Volte-Face!" skewered by the Baron's measured, sardonic tones. "After *Dead Air*, Admiral Greyscale and myself decided to embark on a co-written song based albuMM at some point in the future... he'd helped with spiking the pop arrangement and supplied lyrics and backing vocals for "Fallen Faces", which we both enjoyed working on... In the end, after the Admiral departed, I waded in on a solo basis with the same aim..."

The lyrical bent of *SyMptoMs* echoes the wordplay that has manifested itself in all the verbiage spouted by MM thus far – via their website, mailing list and email correspondence. Hicks channels the British subconscious in all its mundane majesty, allowing the psychic residue of everyday bureaucracy, wage slavery and "*bent institutions*" to seep out like toxic waste. "Over the last decade the Admiral and myself have built up our own email strain of coMMunication which in turn has seeped into the MM's output... we discovered that people like Chris Morris and Iain Sinclair wafted in a similar furrow and got very turned on by the potential to bypass the *Oxford Dic* at every opportunity..."

In 2007 Mordant Music released the first in a series of download-only field recordings dubbed the *Travelogues*. According to Hicks, these sonic derives, with their accent on documentation, acted as a catalyst for the creation of *SyMptoMs*: "Working on the *Travelogues* series has given me more of an insight into the potential for a looser and unrefined approach to writing... the freed-up nature of a recorded day trip against the restrictions imposed for realising each episode seems to have worked well for both the end product and my own mental health... I applied this to this albuMM... I think that the *Travelogues* have made the difference to my scope and applying some of their tactics have given *SyMptoMs* its smell..."

The current pervasiveness of Mordant's pungency is largely down to its parallel existence as a prolific label, releasing diverse sides from dubstep mutant Shackleton, eccentric singer-songwriter Cosmic Dennis Greenidge, bleak Ambient project The Tower and archive material from 1980s/90s Industrial project Mr Maxted among others. Hicks clearly views the rude health of this venture with pride... its every 'spore' lending substance to the Mordant aesthetic.

"There's always something stimulating or someone gravitating towards the Nesst," agrees Hicks, "and MM has been fortunate to encounter artists of integrity like Gary Mills, Sam Shackleton, Alan James et al along the way... MM tries to remain doggedly dogged and the loyal spores who cough up without question will ensure some kind of physical continuance... Brian Morant and Vindicatrix are up on the release dais shortly... I intend to make a start on a docuMMentary..." □ *SyMptoMs* is out now on Mordant Music.



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Global Ear

A survey of sounds from around the planet

Joseph Luna studies the new forms of Javanese gamelan taking shape amid the big city din of

Surakarta

ISI's Pak Pardi directs a new composition on the gamelan sekaten

There are few cities that contain such fecund soundworlds as Central Java's Surakarta. Every side street, public bus, roadside food stall and open space is filled with sonic information – sounds that proffer, direct, attract and beg. All of them are a normal part of everyday social interaction. The public buses, for example, are conducted by a series of hollers, taps and other non-verbal directions to the driver that are reminiscent of the puppeteer's aural instructions to his musicians at a traditional shadow-puppet play. Food stalls on wheels announce their wares as they roll through the city's back streets by clonking, ringing, clanking or playing prerecorded cassette tapes through blaring megaphone speakers. In short, almost every sound is meaningful in some way, a kind of added sonic-semantic texture deeply embedded in everyday life. Not surprising, then, that Surakarta, or Solo for short (after the river upon whose banks it was first raised), is a hive of musical activity both ancient and modern, and along with Yogyakarta, its sister court city, it's a Mecca for foreign students, musicians and artists keen to explore the variety of creative energy on display from the campuses to the street corners.

Western composers have long sought inspiration from the gamelan, Java's most famous musical tradition. The influence of its interlocking patterns and complex rhythmic interactions can be heard from Debussy (who encountered it in Paris in 1889) to Olivier Messiaen and Steve Reich. But in contemporary Solo, modern Indonesian composers are creating new works for the orchestra that not only use traditional gamelan's immensely adaptive vocabulary and melodic fluidity to new ends, but also treat traditional instruments as sites of enormous creative potential, juxtaposing cross-island repertoires and approaching the ensemble itself as an organic tool of composition.

The Institute of the Arts Indonesia (ISI) Surakarta, where I've been enrolled as a student for the last year, is a hotbed of such activity. Lyrichord's *Gamelan Of Java Vol 2: Contemporary Composers*, released in April this year and containing works by the ISI teaching staff, is an exciting showcase of the modern creations emerging from lifelong engagements with the tradition – these pieces are recognisably gamelan, but in shapes and sizes that expand gamelan's sonic territory using instrumental and structural combinations unheard of in the traditional repertoire. Students, too, are encouraged to participate in and compose new works for gamelan. These young composers' works are for the most part staggeringly innovative. Some use self-designed and purpose-built instruments of resonant metal to add new timbres to gamelan's rich aural tapestry; others involve touching use of extra-musical sound, such as uproarious laughter and chatting, mirroring the dialogue between instruments that is a key component of gamelan's melodic processes. All exhibit an instrumental virtuosity combined with a collective compositional approach which is quickly becoming the means by which gamelan is flourishing into the 21st century. While some decry the disintegration of traditional pedagogy with the decline of the Javanese royal courts, the story is not a simple one of a shrinking understanding of the tradition. Instead, it's a multilayered dialogue, in which gamelan is being transformed by young musicians into a music that reflects their historically unprecedented skill and technical mastery as well as their taste for the often gleefully brash and 'geyeng' (joyously lively and interactive). The latter quality particularly jars with the rather outdated Western stereotype of gamelan music as serene and meditative. With new pieces performed by young musicians accompanying a shadow-puppet play, the bigger, brighter, louder and faster the better, with speeds even reminiscent of the furious pace of Bali's gong kebyar ensembles.

This is not to say that the traditional styles are in danger of dying out. The repertoire of pieces and their formal associations in shadow-puppet plays and other important social occasions like weddings and funerals remains the staple diet of performing musicians. One older musician whose respect for the tradition is directly linked to his desire to see gamelan progress is Indonesia's most famous composer and a former rector of ISI, Rahayu Supanggah. As well as being Artist in Residence at London's Southbank Centre in relation to its gamelan project, Supanggah is currently engaged in a collaboration with ISI staff and students for a gamelan opera, a two hour set of new music for the ensemble to be performed with dance accompaniment in Singapore in May 2010. The pieces exhibit a mastery of the traditional vocabulary which is the ground from which new textures and melodic ideas flow – something modern Western composers, content to use the ensemble as a kind of novelty instrument, without acquiring knowledge of its basic structural principles, would do well to take on board. The opera, entitled *Matah Ati*, from the story of a heroine of Central Javanese courtly strife, contains a wealth of exciting new elements, most notably the use of four-part choral harmony in vigorously syncopated vocal sections, gongs laid flat on the ground and beaten to produce a heart-stopping interlocked thudding, and a section (based on traditional *titir* funeral music) that progresses from a rapid, electronic-sounding pulse on a small pot gong to a careening triplet-led tour de force of bashed metallophones which, after building up a terrifying momentum, crashes to a death-defying halt.

With musicians from ISI regularly pursuing not just national but international collaborations (witness the recent ASEAN-Korea Traditional Music Orchestra events in Seoul and Jeju Island, Korea, which involved both staff and students from ISI, and Supanggah's collaboration with electronic duo Plaid at London's Southbank earlier this year, as well as a forthcoming collaboration with The Kronos Quartet in San Francisco), it seems that gamelan's future as a tradition under constant reassessment and compositional flux is assured. It remains to be seen what kind of lasting impact today's young virtuosos will have on the wider historical picture. □

Joseph Luna

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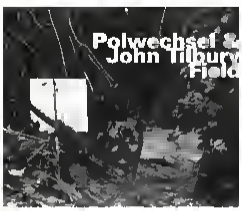

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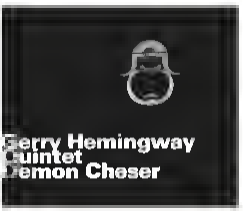

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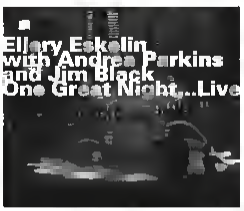

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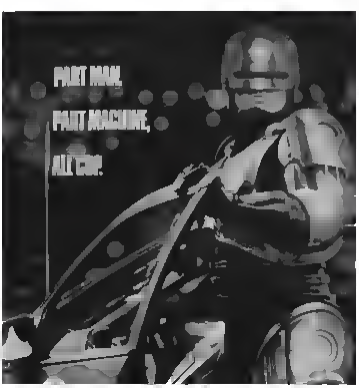

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NO FUN PRODUCTIONS

Formerly of synthesizer duo Beaver & Krause,

Bernie Krause

is now a documentarist of worldwide 'biophany', tracking the noise made by critters and disappearing organisms.

By **Richard Henderson**

Architect Renzo Piano managed a neat trick for the California Academy of Sciences: he created the impression of having slid the enormous structure under San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. The building's skein of metal, glass and solar panels supports a two-and-a-half-acre roof of indigenous vegetation, here the sod roof's primordial form of insulation meets the photovoltaic cell. The first of the Academy's Pritzker Lectures occurs on an evening when this singular building is swathed in fog; its title, "Gorillas In The Mix And The Great Animal Orchestra", indicates a comparable integration of manmade and organic technologies. Comprising equal parts autobiography, travelogue, exposition of the symbiotic relationship between biological sounds and man's own musical efforts, report on advances in recording technology and a cautionary tale about the fate of the planet, it is delivered by a gent whose demeanour suggests the friendlier stripe of undergraduate tutor.

Bernie Krause is introduced as a defining contemporary recordist of natural sounds – or 'biophany', his preferred term for the sound of biological organisms, including those he affectionately refers to as "critters". "Photography can lie, but sound does not lie," he intones, projecting onscreen a graphic analysis of sounds from a forest picked for selective logging in the Pacific North West. The before- and after- the saw pictures are nearly identical. However, the uncut woods yield rich shadings of insect, bird and amphibian sounds whose spectral analysis has the depth of a Pollock canvas, whereas the same area after harvesting displays only a pale resemblance to its earlier depiction.

This intense scrutiny of sound in the field and his corollary studies of biology and acoustics have led Krause to his participation in Aldeburgh Music's Faster Than Sound, uniting him with his UK counterpart, recordist and former Cabaret Voltaire member Chris Watson, along with UK multidisciplinary artist Russell Haswell and surround sound researcher Dr Tony Myatt in a week-long residency involving "field recording, natural history recording, electronic music and immersive surround sound diffusion", and culminating in a collective presentation on 7 November.

The path leading Krause to Suffolk could be described charitably as quixotic. When he was just six weeks old, he was the subject of a 'life reading' by famed psychic Edgar Cayce, who decreed his future would be "tempered with song, music, those things having to do with nature". Cayce's prediction played out in spades. A teenage prodigy in the 1950s, Krause was an early session guitarist for Motown, reporting to a garage studio in his native Detroit, where label founder Berry Gordy himself manned the tape recorder. By the early 60s, Krause replaced Pete Seeger in The Weavers for the final chapter in that pioneering folk group's career.

Subsequently enrolling at Mills College in Oakland, California, he was awakened to the potential of newly developed modular synthesizers. Curiosity led him to the unlikely partner who transformed his career, the early film score synthesist Paul Beaver. As Beaver & Krause, they became first-call session men in the late 60s for those in need of Moog synthesizers, complementing their soundtrack work on films such as *Performance*. In the wake of their *Nonesuch Guide To Electronic Music*, Beaver & Krause signed with Warner Bros for three richly eclectic albums. The first, *In A Wild Sanctuary*, inaugurated an interest in ecology as expressed in the use of biologically generated sound, woven with synthesis and instrumentalists such as Gerry Mulligan and Bud Shank. The partnership ended with Beaver's death in 1974, following the release of their third Warners album, *All Good Men*.

Recording the sounds of 'critters' as integral components of an overall soundscape grew into an all-consuming interest. For the past four decades Krause has been the proprietor of Wild Sanctuary, comprising both the label that releases his and others' recordings of environmental sound, and a service providing custom recordings and sound design to clients such as Pixar Studios and Lucasfilm.

When asked if the shift from performance to the more passive role of recordist inspired any sense of loss, Krause's response was resoundingly positive. "As a matter of fact, [listening to the sound of the biophany] made real for me what the musical literature of the West has meant. And I started as a musician when I was three and a half years old. To me it's no less marvellous or extraordinary or spectacular. I was always drawn to music which claimed to be connected to nature. What I found was, when I looked at it closely, the music of the West speaks to nature, rather than learning from it.

"There are signature critters that white Western composers are drawn to," he continues, "the wolf, the humpback whale, the coyote, certain birds. Messiaen would traipse through the French forests, but he would only notate the birds whose song fitted the musical paradigms that were part of the academy at the time. The birds that he couldn't notate didn't qualify as musical, only those whose song could be mapped onto musical models that he understood. It happened because of our approach to science, born of the Linnaean 18th and 19th century approach, abstracting critters out of context and trying to examine them and learn from each one. When we got around to serious recording in the 1920s, we began to separate out birdsong and mammal voices. We used only the birds with a great melody. You don't see anyone writing symphonies or songs based on the blue whale or seals. Why not? What is it about those critters that isn't musical to us? What it shows is our disconnect from the natural world rather than our connection to that world."

Wondering where such a connection still existed, Krause investigated ethnographic work on the Bayaka Pygmies, Eskimo groups that had very late contact, the Kalului of New Guinea. "Sure enough," he concludes, "what [researchers] have found is that the more closely these groups live to the world around them, the more connected they are to the soundscape and the more their music reflects that connection. And their music reflects the whole soundscape: they don't just take one bird or reptile or amphibian out of context, they include the texture of the entire soundscape around them. Also, most of these groups don't have a word for music or musician. There's no ego involved. The activity is just part of the cultural landscape. When you see the connection between complex rhythms and melody lines that are not within the 12 tones that we recognise as music – I'm talking about microtones and parallel second intervals that beat against one another – sounds that are strange to Western ears absolutely reflect what's going on in the forest." □ Bernie Krause participates in Aldeburgh Music's Faster Than Sound. Listen this month, see Out There.

Call of the wild: Bernie Krause

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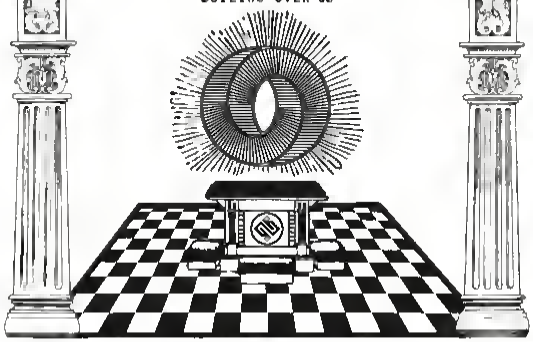

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Aural movie music. Smelling of hot asphalt & sawdust. Assembled by Alessandro Stefanna and featuring guests Chris Speed, Gary Lucas, Bobby Soto and Alessandro Alessandroni who most famously whistled the themes in the Morricone's soundtracks.
A dreaming mixture of rock, psychedelia, folk and country, jazz improvisations and Morricone hints.

ZURICH
Zurich LP
Limited edition of 500 copies pressed at RTI and packaged in heavy duty jackets screen printed at Monomid. Featuring members of Tony Wilson (Knives w/ Resistance), Neil Halstead (Slowdive/Mojave 3), & Sarah Peacock (Seefeel). Recorded at a time when the popularity of ambient techno was at its peak, these recordings are remarkably austere by comparison.

THE SEVEN STOREY MOUNTAIN
Seven Storey Mountain CD
The Seven Storey Mountain is a trans-generation group of highly recognized figures in modern music. Paul Lytton has been playing drums with Evan Parker since 1969. David Grubbs, a recognized for his work in Gastr Del Sol, Bastro, Squirrel Bait & extensive solo work. Nate Wooley is one of the most exciting young trumpet players currently working.

JOZEF VAN WISSEM
Ex Patris LP
Limited edition of 500
The title Ex Patris (from the fathers) plays on the idiomatic baroque lute compositions presented here which emulate the classical repertoire. It also refers to this almost forgotten instrument, which was passed on by the fathers. The aim is to bring back and liberate the lute. The four compositions on Ex Patris form a circular narrative of interlocking repetitive melodic series.

HOLY SONS
Criminals Return CD
With Holy Sons newest full-length "Criminal's Return", Emil Amos (Grails/Om) dabbles in the "Revenge Fantasy" genre going toe to toe with Roger Waters in the race to become the most bitter songwriter in the world.

ELIANE RADIGUE
Vice Versa, Etc. CD
Vice Versa, etc. was only ever released on reel to reel tape in a tiny gallery edition of 10 copies. The original reel to reel release was made to be played forwards and backwards. This double CD set has both the forwards and backwards versions on separate CDs. This will allow dedicated listeners to experiment with simultaneous playback of the work's different versions, recreating the conditions of the original installation. For later listeners, a simple playthrough provides complete satisfaction: a listening experience that lives itself in the indelible & abstract beauty of these four variations.

ELIANE RADIGUE
Triptych CD
Triptych is an entirely unMemorial Eliane Radigue composition. Like its sister release Vice Versa, Etc., available at the same time via Important, Triptych contains never before seen archival photos as well as liner notes.
On the suggestion of Robert Ashley, Douglas Dunn commissioned the piece from Eliane Radigue for choreography. Only the first part of Triptych was staged at the premiere of the Dancehall/Theatre of Nancy on February 27, 1978. This is a three-part composition of great humility and contemplative simplicity. Recorded in the composer's studio in Paris.

Invisible Jukebox

Each month we play an artist a series of records which they are asked to identify and comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they are about to hear. This month it's the turn of

Jim Jarmusch

Tested by **Alan Licht**

Film maker Jim Jarmusch arrived in New York City via Akron, Ohio in the early 1970s. After a brief stay in Paris, he returned to New York and enrolled at a graduate film programme while also playing keyboards in the post-punk group The Del Byzanteens. Working as an assistant to film noir legend Nicholas Ray, Jarmusch in turn met and befriended director Wim Wenders, who was making a documentary about Ray. Wenders gave Jarmusch unused film stock that enabled him to make a short feature, *Permonent Vocation* (1980). His first full-length film, the deadpan travelogue *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984), achieved critical and commercial success and has become a classic of independent/arthouse cinema.

Paradise starred musicians John Lurie, Richard Edson and Eszter Balint, not to mention a cameo from cult hiphop figure Rammellzee, and Jarmusch has continued to cast musicians in his seven subsequent features, including Tom Waits (*Down By Law*, 1986), Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Rufus Thomas, and Joe Strummer (*Mystery Train*, 1989), and Iggy Pop (*Dead Man*, 1995). Jarmusch asked Neil Young to score *Dead Man*, and Wu-Tang Clan's RZA to score *Ghost Dog: Way Of The Samurai* (1999). Still an avid music consumer, he has filled his recent films with everything from Ethiopian jazz and funk (in *Broken Flowers*, 2005) to Doom/Drone Metal (*The Limits Of Control*, released on 11 December). He's also formed a new group, Bad Rabbit, which contributed instrumentals to *The Limits Of Control*'s soundtrack.

The Jukebox took place at the offices of Focus Features in New York City.

Camera Press / Andy Cantillon

Boris with Keiji Haino

"From The Distance, With Their Own Gentle Eyes Always Fixed On Us, They Are Affectionately Gazing At The Black"

From *Black Implication Flooding* (Inoxia) 1998

This must be Boris, but I can't identify what track it is.

It's them with Keiji Haino.

It's beautiful. Their collaborations are beautiful. I love when they play with Michio Kurihara, the guitarist, it's fantastic. And what's really remarkable is when they play live they're in the mode, in a way, of jazz musicians, not structurally or musically, but the way they listen to what the others are doing and build on it. Each time they play something it's obviously different, every time.

I know that you've been listening to this sort of thing for the last ten years, and I've heard that Earth's album *Hex, Or Printing In The Infernal Method* was partially inspired by Neil Young's music for *Dead Man*.

Oh really, I didn't know that.

So it's almost a...

...circular...

...appreciation. And you used Sleep in the soundtrack to *Broken Flowers*.

Yes, part of *Oopesmoker*, or *Jerusolem*. Yeah, I love those guys, and OM is pretty interesting too. I've never seen Earth live, I guess it's hard to see them, they don't tour much. It's hard to see Sunn O))), but I've been able to see them a few times. But I love these kind of visual landscapes they make, and they really inspired things for me for my film *The Limits Of Control*, because when I write I'm listening to things that inspire me in the direction of whatever world I'm imagining. Boris and Sunn O))) and Earth were really instrumental in me just finding a place in my head. But I've done that before, I've done that with RZA's instrumental tracks and Neil Young.

Gavin Bryars

"Tramp and Tom Waits with Full Orchestra"

From *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* (Point Music) 1993

OK, well, it's *Jesus' Blood* – is this the Gavin Bryars version of *Jesus' Blood*? Now, does this have a lot of permutations in the use of *Jesus' Blood*, because I know Tom Waits was...

This is that version, maybe you can't quite hear him yet.

Yeah. Beautiful. [As Waits comes up in the mix] Beautiful mixture of those two voices.

I was wondering if you knew this piece, since in *The Limits Of Control* there's a lot of use of variation and repetition.

Yeah, but I think there are other versions, there's one without Tom Waits...

The original version was on Obscure, Brian Eno's label.

I love this other Gavin Bryars piece, *The Sinking Of The Titanic*. Since you brought up Eno, one thing on my film [*The Limits Of Control*] that helped me at times was the Oblique Strategies, and actually now my friend Carter has it now on an iPhone. Here's a few I got when I was making the film, because I wrote them down: 'Are these sections considered transitions?' 'Emphasise repetitions.' 'Look closely at the most interesting details and amplify them.' [Laughs] Which is exactly what we were doing, so it was like reassurance, in a way. Those were really helpful to me, and they still are.

Eno did *Discreet Music*, which also used a loop – one that was actually played at half-speed, which you did with Javanese gamelan music in *Permonent Vacation*.

Yes. You're one of two people that know that [laughter].

You've used a lot of singers in your films, were you aware that Tom Waits had done some acting before *Down By Law*?

Not really, I just asked if he was interested, and he said he had done a little, and he was interested, so then I started writing for him. I mean, I knew him fairly well at that point although we had only met six months before I started writing. I just had a good feeling that he'd be great to write for. I think some musicians are natural actors because they are performing, and others are not, for whatever reason. And others vary by the director. I've seen Mick Jagger do some kind of not so interesting things, and yet I think his performance in the film *Performance* is *fantastic*, a great character they made, y'know? And I love watching that film, I've seen it ten times, and I'm always impressed. Iggy is a great actor. He just has to trust you. 'Cause I think Iggy, if you don't work with him, it's like with all actors, they have to trust you. He's, potentially, a great actor.

The Stooges

"Greedy Awful People"

From *The Weirdness* (Virgin) 2007

It's Iggy, but from when? It's post-Stooges Iggy, right?

Well, it is and it isn't.

Is it the recent Stooges stuff? Off *Skull Ring*, or the last one?

The Weirdness

Ah, you know, I didn't quite devour that record very thoroughly.

Have you ever listened to that complete *Funhouse* sessions box?

Yeah, I have it.

What's incredible about that is *Funhouse* always seemed like a live record, then you realise they're doing 30 takes of "Loose", yet it still sounds fresh enough to be the first take. I was wondering what you thought about doing multiple takes of a song in the studio, as a player, and then doing multiple takes of a scene on a film set – if you've ever compared those two experiences?

Yeah, definitely, because to me film making is like making a record, as opposed to the theatre, which is like playing live. But the thing that's weird to me, now, making some more records, making this new [Bad Rabbit] record, is that we have three guys in our band – me, Carter, who's the drummer and plays, sometimes, bass, and then Shane, who plays everything else, whatever we want to add on, but he's our wizard. A lot of my guitar stuff that I've laid out

as just the guide track. I've never gone back to them because Shane's like, 'No no no, that's good, that's good.' And I'm like, 'Yeah, but, that's terrible,' and he'll say 'No, you've got two tracks. Listen to them together, they sound great, you don't need to play it again.' So it's kind of shocking to me, and maybe it's true that often on a film the first take is the best, because they're not thinking about it as much. Different actors are different, but very often the first take is the most *honest*, in a way, and usually it's the one that's fucked up for technical reasons, because it's the first take. They're definitely related, and the thing is, whatever you get, in the moment, is what you get, and when you do it again it's never the same. Or if it is, then you're imitating what you already did and then you've lost some instinctive thing.

Mahmoud Ahmed
"Ere Mele Mele"
From Various *Ethiopiques Volume 7* (Buda Musique) 1999 rec 1975

It's Ethiopian. It's not Mulatu [Astatke]?
No, although this does sound a lot like one of his tracks in *Broken Flowers*.
[After the vocal comes in] Ah. OK. I can't remember who this is, but I know this track from the *Ethiopiques* collection.
Yeah, it's Mahmoud Ahmed from *Volume 7*. There's this very unresolved quality to the music, there are always these notes that create a kind of tension with the one droning chord in the background. I thought that was interesting in the context of *Broken Flowers* because the whole movie is kind of unresolved, as far as who wrote the letter, whether the letter is real, is he really a father, even in the end.
Interesting. I never thought of it like that. The music is so particular, it's got an African thing, a kind of Middle Eastern thing, somewhere in there as well, and then that funk kind of sound, and jazz.
Was this also something you were listening to when you were writing *Broken Flowers*?
Yeah, I was listening to a lot of this. I discovered Mulatu, particularly, and I was listening to other stuff from that little garden of music from Ethiopia. And it was kind of weird because I'm thinking, man, I really wanna use this music in the film but my film is about suburban America – 'Generica', we were referring to it as. And I thought, that never really stopped you before, what difference does that make? And then it led me to, well, I'm going to make that other character, that Jeffrey Wright played, of Ethiopian origin, so at least there's some little connection in there. It's funny, the music led me to details of the script and characters.

John Lurie & Richard Edson
"Main Theme"
From *Scott & Beth B's Vortex Original Soundtrack* (Neutral) 1982

Oh, man – I'll say it's John Zorn, but I don't know, it's not Ornette...
It's from *Vortex*, the Scott and Beth B movie.
Oh really? It's The Lounge Lizards?
It's John Lurie and Richard Edson.
Oh, OK. I don't remember this particular track. Sounds familiar.
You've talked a lot about how No Wave cinema was a real inspiration, and in The Del Byzenteens you weren't even the only film maker in the group, because James Nares, also from The Contortions, was in it too.
That's right.
There was a lot of back and forth in the No Wave scene between people playing in groups and either acting or directing.
Or painting. James Nares was a very good film maker, painter, visual artist. But everybody did something else. Phil Kline, our guitar player, was pretty much first and foremost a musician, and an amazing composer. There were a lot of things I loved about No Wave, I loved the idea of Arto [Lindsay] and those guys of removing any references to blues based music, which was really an interesting kind of oblique strategy – you know, 'use these increments and make no reference to blues based music'. But yeah, it was the whole idea of do it yourself then, it's for the expression and not to get over, was such a positive, formative thing for me.
This track really has a film noir feeling to it. Was that something of interest in that scene at the time? The noir? That was earlier for me, because when I met one of my oldest friends, Luc Sante, the writer, we met at Columbia as students, and we were both devouring Richard Stark, devouring Charles Willeford, all this stuff, before other people were. But that was a little bit before that downtown scene, or before our connection to it.
Even in the original CBGB scene, both Patti Smith and Tom Verlaine were really into Mickey Spillane. And one of my favourite record reviews of all time is Paul Nelson's review of the first Ramones album, where he takes the entry on director Samuel Fuller in Andrew Sarris's book *The American Cinema* and just puts 'The Ramones' in everywhere it says 'Sam Fuller'.
Really? Wow, amazing. I went to see Television at this club called Mother's, like a storefront that existed for one month or something, and handwritten outside it said, 'Appearing tonight: Television. "Four cats with a passion" – Nicholas Ray.' And I was like, 'What?' That was the first time I saw Television, actually.

Rammellzee
'Jamin Zabar Jamin Zabar"
From *The Bi-Conicals Of The Rammellzee* (Gomma) 2004

I don't know.
Its Rammellzee.
It is?
It's from a CD he did about five years ago.
Wow. I guess that's musical neo-Gothic panzerism. Or something. You know the early stuff he did with Jean-Michel Basquiat?
Yes.
Well, that guy, talk about multifaceted brains – Rammellzee is amazing. I don't know if you've seen these kind of warrior-robot statues that look like a cross between really classical Japanese samurai armour and some kind of futuristic space stuff from somewhere in the recesses of his imagination. And all his theories of history and reinvented history. He builds puppets and things that fly... incredible. Someone told me that Rammellzee is the originator of the use of the word 'word', in hiphop slang. That he started that way back, and would answer people by just saying 'word', and that that spread from Rammellzee. I don't know if that's true or myth, but if you have to imagine an origin, the idea of reducing everything to the word 'word' is so Rammellzee-like.
Was he someone you thought of when you were starting to formulate the samurai-like character of *Ghost Dog*?
Not really... he had a big impact on me, still, his imagination, so it's hard to say. It wasn't conscious, but that idea of warriors that are imaginary and have a code that doesn't relate to the real world anymore.
RZA, when he did the music for *Ghost Dog*, told you, just cut this up and use it wherever you want, which relates to William Burroughs, and the cut-up, but maybe also to some of Rammellzee's interest in taking language apart.
Yeah, for sure. Hiphop culture is founded on that. It's related to those things, almost to the *I Ching*, somehow.
It's great what they're doing to his voice on this track, it's really ferocious-sounding...
Like a demon. Which brings me to – I just wanna rant for a second against the fucking vocoder! I don't know if I want to kill Kanye West or whoever started this vocoder thing again... it's such a cheesy, easy way, gimmicky thing. I don't inherently dislike it, but its current fashionable use in hiphop is driving me up the wall, I just can't stand it.
Actually the next artist I'm going to play used a vocoder at one time.
Peter Frampton? [Laughs]

Neil Young
"Thresher"
From *Rust Never Sleeps* (Reprise) 1978

Bernard Shakey [Neil Young's film making alias]
It's from a Bernard Shakey film, *Rust Never Sleeps*.
What would be more interesting is to make someone identify which of Neil's acoustic guitars this is. [laughs]
He's made several films, but people don't think of him as being a film maker. When you were working with him on the soundtrack to *Dead Man* and then on *Year Of The Horse* [Jarmusch's 1997 documentary of a Young/Crazy Horse tour], did you have many conversations with him as film maker to film meker?
Oh yeah. We talked a lot about film making because he liked that I knew his film work and would talk to him as a film maker. He was like, 'Hey, nobody talks to me like *I'm* a film maker.' I really like the film *Greendale* [2003] a lot. I like how Neil did it himself, and some of the camera work is very... I don't know, sophisticated in a crude way. He really *thinks* about films.

Still from Jim Jarmusch's *The Limits Of Control* (2009)

This particular track was used in *Out Of The Blue*, the 1981 Dennis Hopper film, in one scene where he's working at a garbage dump, operating a bulldozer. Hopper's *Easy Rider* was the first narrative feature film that used pre-existing songs on the soundtrack. You've done that a lot, and professed a dislike for standard film music.

Well, it's such a formula – I get so bored, it's like they have five scores, they may as well just pass them around and reuse them, I can't tell the difference, really, it's all the same. With the world of music so varied, it just is mind-boggling that they use the most formulaic thing. There are people doing some interesting things, like T-Bone Burnett, he tries to bring something in there. I'm glad his hand is in film scoring, somewhere, somehow, but... I don't know. I just love music so much it's dismaying to me to see it reduced to wallpeper.

Phil Kline
"Dark Was The Night"
From *John The Revelator* (Cantaloupe Music) 2009

I feel like I should know this piece.

This is Phil Kline's version of "Dark Was The Night."

Oh. I saw this twice, performed. What did he take from "Dark Was The Night", the chord structure? Or just a general, vague inspiration?

I think he's said it's kind of a fantasy on the melody. Do you know a piece of his called "Ashtabula"? It's fantastic, really beautiful.

Did you know Phil in Akron?

Yes, Phil is my oldest friend. When we were in fourth grade, he moved to my town, a neighbouring town. He was brought in to our classroom, and the teacher said, 'This is a new student, his name is Phil, he moved here from Stow. OK, he needs a buddy to show him the school, it's going to be you, Jim – you're going to be his buddy.' And I was wearing a cub scout uniform, because I was briefly in the cub scouts. He probably thought I was a real nerd, but he was the new kid, so he was out of place. And we were friends ever since, we're still friends. I hear things in this track that I know inspire Phil, not just Blind Willie Johnson – like Henry Purcell. I love that there are no boundaries in terms of genres, really, for him. He's interested in all forms.

I saw an interview you did with The White Stripes where you told them that blues is the one kind of music that you always carry with you.

I don't remember telling them that, but it's definitely true, yeah. I have to have something with me, some blues, if I get freaked out or – I don't know, it's just reassuring to know I have it with me. Whether it's Mississippi Fred McDowell or Charley Patton or whatever. I love Mississippi Fred's guitar playing, lately it's really been speaking to me.

Sibylle Baier
"Softly"
From *Colour Green* (Orange Twin) 2006 rec 1970–73

It's not Holly Golightly...

This one is pretty obscure.

Is it old?

It is – but it was only released a couple of years ago. It's Sibylle Baier, who was in Wim Wenders's 1974 film *Alice In The Cities* – she's in it towards the end singing this song a cappella. She was friends with Wim. She recorded this version at home in the early 70s, but it was never released. Her son, I think, discovered the tapes she made and managed to get it released with help from J Mascis.

Really? Wow. It's like echoing back in my brain, I guess just from seeing the film, but I couldn't pull it out. Sibylle Baier. Cool.

You knew Wenders way back at the beginning of your career – did you guys talk about music quite a bit?

We talked about music a lot, but just like friends, like what are you listening to, what have you heard lately? He was always pretty up on everything. Although not about the whole stoner, shoegazer – whatever that is – stuff that I love. It's not really Wim's thing. I don't know if he's a My Bloody Valentine fan, I'm sure he doesn't listen to *Dopesmoker* obsessively, because he's probably more into Ry Cooder or something. But yeah, Wim, he's a total rock 'n' roll soul, from the start. And our love for The Kinks will unite us forever.

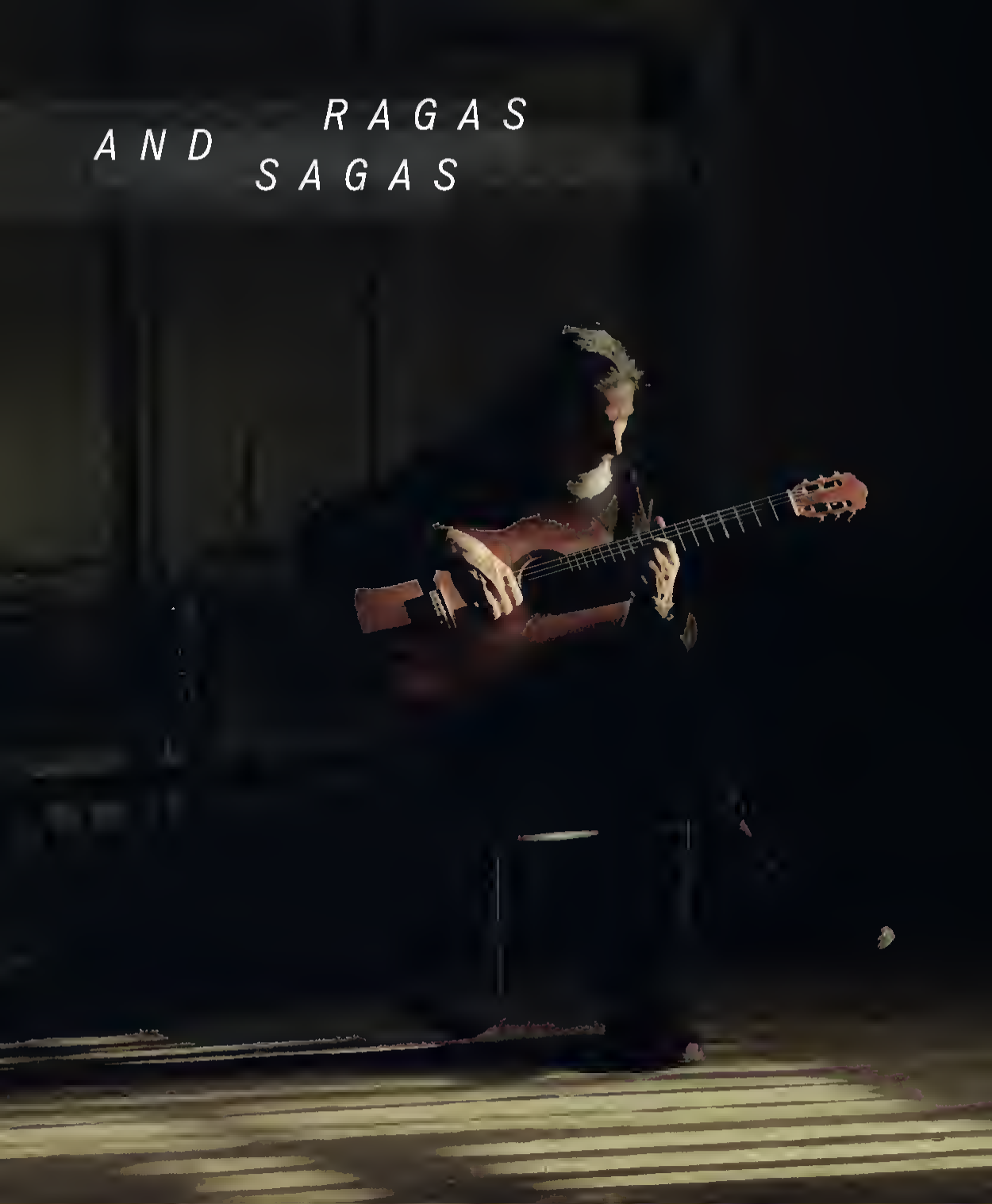
Wenders is another example of a director using songs from his own record collection on his soundtracks. Did that make an impression on you back then?

Probably, yes, but by then, like you were saying, it was almost a tradition that was started by *Easy Rider*, or *Mean Streets*, all those films I'd already absorbed. I loved Wim's choice of music in those early films – rock 'n' roll – and he did something that used them atmospherically. Scorsese uses them to drive something, or push it, in a masterful way. And there's something a bit different with Wim, it was a little ethereal: how your brain associates them with what's happening on the screen.

I considered asking Boris to make me some new music for *The Limits Of Control*, but then I thought, why do that if I can use stuff that already exists if they'll maybe let me edit a little? I asked them, and they were really cool with that, and they were also really busy, so they might not have been able to do it anyway.

But I like using existing things in scoring. I love it when things sync up like that. When I was 20 I used to spend a lot of time when I first was in New York smoking herb and then playing Fletcher Henderson and Sidney Bechet records, and then watching out the window how the world would sync to the music, in hilariously perfect ways. You know, it was just a stoner thing, but it was endless amusement to see how a little accent on a high hat would be with some motion of somebody, every little thing synched to something, it was fantastic. It's very mysterious and magical. Of course, I've never tried synching up *Dark Side Of The Moon* with *The Wizard Of Oz*, or whatever that is. I say *Metal Machine Music* would synch better [laughs] □

RAGAS AND SAGAS



Peter Walker at Cecil Sharp House, Camden Town, London, March 2009

As a lesser known contemporary of John Fahey and Robbie Basho, guitarist **Peter Walker** is being reclaimed by a new legion of acid folk artists for his late 1960s raga-blues. **David Keenan** meets the well-travelled storyteller who once sat at Timothy Leary's right hand. Photography by **Joss McKinley**

Peter Walker is sprawled across the couch in a tenement flat in Glasgow, a copy of the 1974 edition of Haney, Ballantine & Elliott's epochal *Woodstock Handmade Houses* in his hand. He flicks through the pages, picking out pictures of beautiful wood-lined cabins with flaky iron stoves, tattered American flags on the wall and trees growing right through the middle. "Lived there," he announces. "Bought that one. Was offered that one in a deal. Slept in that bed. Knew the girl who designed that poster." Walker's recall would seem to be crystal clear, even if the specific detail appears a little unlikely. Despite only making one landmark LP in his career – 1967's *Rainy Day Raga* – and spending the bulk of the next few decades off the map altogether, the way he tells it, he was at the epicentre of every countercultural explosion this side of the Beats. Musical director at Millbrook for Timothy Leary's acid tests, guitar tutor to James Gurley of Big Brother & The Holding Company, drug buddy of Karen Dalton and Tim Hardin, anti-Nixon political provocateur in the pay of the Kennedys, lifelong Hispanophile on a mission to reconcile modal and flamenco techniques, stylistic forefather to a new generation of guitarists including Jack Rose, Six Organs Of Admittance's Ben Chasny and James Blackshaw... across the evening we touch on them all. Even more implausibly, most of them are true.

While in recent years *Rainy Day Raga* has been accorded a disproportionate historico-cultural weight through players like Chasny claiming it as a bigger influence than the better known work of John Fahey or Robbie Basho, the reality of Walker's story, not to say his contribution to contemporary guitar soli, is as confusing, unlikely and historically potent as the decade that gave birth to it. "Woodstock is full of men-hating lesbians," he shrugs. "Once every two or three years a piece of talent comes through and cuts a swathe. Otherwise, forget it."

Walker is in the UK to kick off a European tour. After a couple of decades of low-paid work and restaurant gigs, he has re-emerged with a new sound – a guitar style drawn from his decades-long apprenticeship with authentic Spanish guitarists in Spain and South America – and a new following, thanks to the cheerleading work of the Tompkins Square label. In 2006 they released *A Raga For Peter Walker*, an album that matched Walker's first recordings in 37 years with tributes from acolytes that included Thurston Moore and Steffen Basho-Junghans. "I like that English guy, what's his name," Walker says. "That young fellow on the compilation. [James] Blackshaw. Oh boy. I see a lot of John Fahey in what he does. That same 'olde worlde' quality that Fahey conveyed using walls of sound. Travis picking, that's what you call it. I never could get the hang of it. It was like the jitterbug, I just couldn't move that way. But Fahey was a master Travis picker. The convoluted evolution of his music is beautiful to watch."

Walker's own picking style is less rhythmic and less immediately iconoclastic than Fahey's. He has a feel for time that's more conversational than metric, pausing and picking up threads in the way that you would while telling a story, mixing a sensual lightness of touch with delicate ornamentation and an understanding of Indian scales. Timothy Leary described him as playing "on the ancient protean strings of the genetic code".

"You can be who you wanna be this time around!" Walker bursts, rising from the couch and waving his hands above his head for emphasis. "You know? The psychedelic effect was very important. I started to do dramatic things which affected the course of my life. I remember playing Risk on LSD and thinking, Paris is only three inches away, I'll fly over in the morning." He fixes me with a penetrating look, waiting for the penny to drop. "You know? LSD experiences were almost violently uprooting of the mind. When it got to the point that we were just squirting syringes full of the stuff all over trays of sugarcubes, with wildly varying doses, I knew I had to get out."

Leary appointed Walker 'musical director' at his experimental Millbrook residence in 1965, two years before he cut *Rainy Day Raga*. Prior to that, Walker had been running a guitar store in Boston and making the scene on the folk circuit in Greenwich Village after splitting from San Francisco. "Yeah. I had been teaching Jim Gurley guitar back west," he says. "I wasn't too versed in rock guitar but I could

play chords on a nylon string guitar and make them sound sweet. We just sat around The Bagel Shop and jammed. The film maker Ron Rice was there, collecting quarters to buy film, Joan Baez was there. I liked Ferlinghetti's poetry. I read Kerouac and went travelling across the country. I left home when I was about 14, travelled through the Deep South before segregation. Man! In those days I was just a gawky-eyed kid looking round. I had a harmonica in my pocket and I could play "Dixie" and "Yellow Rose Of Texas", and that gets you out of any trouble in the South."

Walker met Leary after he bailed a mutual friend out of jail. When word made it to the Leary camp that Walker was working on combining Country blues with drones and Indian scales – not to say his own prodigious appetite for drugs – they booked him to soundtrack their sacramental LSD sessions along with his buddy, guitarist Monte Dunn, with whom he had been working as a session musician for Columbia.

"We were officially Tim's musical entertainment," he recalls. "I presented a half hour to 15 minutes of music. We'd bring the entire crowd to their feet, which always pissed Tim off. We weren't supposed to steal Tim's thunder. Monte filled in the holes. Whatever I was not doing, he would do. That was his skill as a studio musician. He would say, 'Oh, there's nothing in the bass range', and he would add a nice descending bassline. We were improvising, making it up as we went along. That was part of the fun of it. Always."

Walker had first fallen under the spell of Indian music when he saw Ravi Shankar play back in his San Francisco days. But it wasn't until a fortuitous meeting with bit part actor and notorious hellraiser John Drew Barrymore in Mexico that he began to investigate its mechanics. Walker had holed up in a house owned by Barrymore, where he claims an undercover CIA operative had dosed the hapless actor with mescaline and was reading to him from the Tibetan Book Of The Dead in an "obvious attempt to cop his mind". "You see, I was street smart," Walker winks. "I learned about that stuff from being a friend of Tim's. They had him stretched out on a couch and as soon as they went out of the room I ran in and said 'Hi John! You know my cute, sexy girlfriend, Midnight? She would just love to cook you a cheeseburger.' You see what I'm saying?" I nod. "A beautiful, sexy chick? A cheeseburger? Unheard of in Mexico at the time. After that we were friends." Before Barrymore returned to the States, he ripped the stereo out of his car and presented it to Walker along with a handful of Ravi Shankar cassettes and a slowly expiring car battery. "It slowed down all the tapes!" Walker beams. "I had been inspired by Ravi before the trip but now with the slowed-down playback I could finally figure out what he was playing and build my own Ravi-like repertoire. I began translating it to the guitar. Barrymore was my patron, in a way."

Rainy Day Raga, released by Vanguard in 1967, represents the first flowering of these early studies. The album has a gentle, breezy quality to it, a sublime candyfloss high that sets Walker's cascading fingerpicking against subtle drones, jazz flute, tabla and tambura. The follow-up, 1969's *Second Poem To Karmela, Or Gypsies Are Important*, goes even deeper into Indian music, with Walker playing sarod and sitar, but it lacks the period-perfect feel of the first. "I'll confess something to you," Walker interrupts. "When I was playing in the 1960s I felt like I was cheating a little. I was working as a session player and I always felt like I didn't know what I thought I should know to be doing that job. And then to make two albums for Vanguard? You got guys like [jazz guitarist] Larry Coryell working overtime and here's me, making it all up as I go along. I was a listener. I would smoke pot, and pot has the ability to enhance the enjoyment of sound. You hear all these resonant notes appear. That's what happens when I play, it's enhanced hearing that stimulates you to further creativity. You take this riff, you focus in on it, you take your time and then... Ohm!" He crosses his eyes like he's been zapped in the forehead. "At this point in my life I have formed a conditioned reflex response mechanism. Pot equals play. Pot head space, play head space."

Walker is full of fantastic drug stories: kicking heroin, using it as painkiller, kicking it again, harvesting organic mescaline from snake venom, dosing CIA agents, getting high with Tim Hardin... "See, I think the psychedelic aesthetic was really important," he insists. "I could almost compare it to the Dbema and Harverd effect. If you expose yourself to Harvard University, well, you get permission, psychological permission, to be the best in the world at anything you want to do. And you need that psychological permission. The best is out there to be achieved. So for me it was like, go where you want, follow Sandy Bull, where is he going to lead? Oh look, he's bringing in stuff from the Middle East, that's cool man. That oud music, where's that from? What's the connection between Arab music and flamenco? Let's track that one down. Let's go live in Spain, let's move to North Africa, we'll find that connection. Then you meet these guys and they suck – where's the pure, ancient stuff? So you go back to Malaga and up and down the Andalucian coast. There's great stuff there. You run out of money and go back to the US. You head for Mexico where this pure shit is poured down your throat, or you catch a concert with Ravi Shankar. It all falls together one step after another. But psychedelics kick it off."

Sandy Bull was an influential guitarist whose early releases were some of the first recordings to make connections between American folk traditions, nascent psychedelia, free jazz and Asian and Middle Eastern modes. Alongside Walker and the tragically under-recorded Pat Kilroy, Bull made up a triumvirate of early raga guitar innovators whose individual approaches highlighted the common tonal and rhythmic ancestry of disparate World Musics. Both Bull and Walker also made extensive explorations of traditional European idioms, but whereas Bull focused on the decorated architecture of English Early Music, Walker's investigations took him to the outlaw music of the Spanish underclass, flamenco. Although he had been travelling to Spain and studying with master players well before *Rainy Day Raga*, it wasn't until

"I presented a half hour to 15 minutes of music. We'd bring the entire crowd to their feet, which always pissed Tim Leary off. We weren't supposed to steal Tim's thunder"

he inherited a substantial sum of money that he was able to spend more time in the country and immerse his family in the culture. "I had my kids taught by a Gypsy teacher," he beams, "which was cool beans in the community. I tell the Spanish audiences I learned the flamenco in 1963 and then I played for 30 years in the back of a truck with no singer and no dancer and no rhythm player and so all these years I developed a technique and the ability to make a sweet note happen. And that's what Segovia [the late Spanish classical guitarist] says is important, that what you wanna do is bring out the sweetness of the instrument and let people hear it."

Walker has a personal theory about the parallel development of Indian raga and Spanish flamenco, based around the transport of Bengal slaves by Muslim captors to southern Spain in the eighth century, pointing to commonalities in rhythmic structures and the fact that there are specific forms of raga and flamenco dedicated to certain times of the day. Other commentators date the development of the music to the long migration of Gypsies from India in the 15th century, while there are schools that see the magpie nature of flamenco as being more informed by the itinerant, Gypsy lifestyles of the players than direct infusions from the East.

"I was like, this is ringing a bell," he expands. "You mean like evening ragas and morning ragas, late night flamenco and early afternoon flamenco? Where do you get this from? What's this about? In both traditions there are major scales in the afternoon, then it gets really minor late at night. Then they invent other intervals to make it even more minor in the early hours and then they transition into these beautiful major keys as the day unfolds. It's the day and night of music, right there. I would make notes and compare them, and what's this? The 3am scale for the raga system is the same as the 3am scale for the flamenco system! That's not a smoking gun, mind. But then one of my teachers mentioned how there was an oral tradition in his family about how they were kidnapped in Bengal in the eighth century and brought as prizes to Spain by the Muslims, so that means the musical system they brought with them was the classical musical system of India in the eighth century. That served as the basis of flamenco, and it changed European music. Even today, when you go to see flamenco performers playing concerts in caves, I heard one guy do this long introduction and I had someone translate it and he described flamenco as the ancient wisdom of the East!"

Walker's contemporary work is all based around flamenco styles and rhythms. His recent *Spanish Guitar* album for Birdman is a solid investigation of traditional World folk, even if his technique is a little less remarkable than it once was. But for those more attuned to the exploratory style of old, the recent release on Tompkins Square of a previously unheard session cut at The Band's Levon Helm's house in Woodstock in 1970, and featuring Walker on both electric and acoustic guitar, works as a timely

reconnection to the source. Originally intended to be an official release, but held in limbo until now because of the vagaries of Walker's Vanguard contract, *Long Lost Tapes 1970* presents another side of the guitarist, playing in a lucid, plugged-in style that reconnects with the arc of his shadow Sandy Bull's career while electrifying Indian, Eurasian and American folk styles. The bulk of the music is improvised, building on the kind of instant energy constructs that would frame his Millbrook sessions with Monte Dunn, and it includes appearances by two great, though relatively unsung free jazz players: clarinettist Perry Robinson and saxophonist Mark Whitecage, alongside later P-funk All Star Maruge Booker on drums and Miles Davis/Ornette Coleman collaborator Badal Roy on tabla. "The label loves it," Walker shrugs. "I don't. I don't like electric guitar. I'm a traditionalist!" he laughs. "But that, as they say, is my problem."

It's 3am. Walker reaches for his acoustic guitar, previously owned by starcrossed folk singer Karen Dalton, and starts to play. Earlier that evening, while waiting for the interview to begin, he had propped up his suitcase at the bottom of the communal tenement stairwell and played for 30 minutes, neighbours coming and going all the while, the whole building vibrating with ghostly overtones with Walker lost to himself and his surroundings somewhere deep inside. "When I was in South America I went to the museums of gold," he relates. "They all wore gold clothes, these people. Hot chicks in gold clothes, what more could you want? And they had these flutes going back thousands of years, bone flutes with four holes. My neighbour across the hall showed me his stone flute and he could get three octaves out of it where you use your hand as part of the instrument and you could communicate for miles, with everyone, just play from the top of a mountain if you wanted. He took me up on the roof – we were on the 17th floor – and he played this thing and bounced the sounds off all the tall buildings in the downtown area. And it was incredible."

"You see, it's a language of sorts," he insists. "The original languages were sung, weren't they? You can play a note that will create an illusion in the brain to the point that you can hypnotise and carry away and spiritually elevate." He reaches for an ashtray, lights up a joint. "Always with benevolent forethought, mind." Then he disappears in a puff of smoke. ☐ *A Raga For Peter Walker* and *Long Lost Tapes 1970* are out on Tompkins Square, *Spanish Guitar* is out on Birdman.

SCHEMATIC FOR THE PEOPLE

Before his commitment to revolutionary politics required him to subjugate all his art to the demands of the class struggle, **Cornelius Cardew** raised important questions about control and freedom with his groundbreaking graphic score *Treatise*. Reopening the book on the composer's legacy, **Philip Clark** takes today's New Music scene to task for its refusal to face up to the challenges that shaped Cardew's work. Illustration by **Karl Nawrot & Walter Warton**

***Treatise*, the graphic score** Cornelius Cardew completed in 1967, is music you can see and philosophy you truly hear – the most profound statement the composer would make about two polarities that framed, and determined, his progress as a musician and eventual political activist freedom and control. By the time Cardew began to conceptualise *Treatise* in 1963, he had been back in the UK for three years. From 1957 to 1960, he had been holed up in Cologne working with Karlheinz Stockhausen, first as an awestruck student, later as his loyal but increasingly sceptical assistant. His task: to bring to fruition as workable, functioning music notation the byzantine pre-composition plans Stockhausen had envisaged for *Carré*, a new work for four choirs and four orchestras.

Carré was the 'sequel' to *Gruppen* (1955–57) Stockhausen's epoch-moulding composition that bounced material around three spatially dispersed orchestras, giving the audience sitting between them a 3D sonic thrill. Barely a decade on from his own first compositions, Cardew now found himself at the pivotal hub of the Central European avant garde, charged with making creative decisions on behalf of New Music's most symbolically powerful, forward-thinking auteur. To a restless and progressive British composer of Cardew's generation – born in 1936, thereby obliged to find his creative feet in a parochial 1950s New Music scene that was comically behind the times and proud of it – Central European composers like Stockhausen, Pierre Boulez and Luigi Nono represented artistic Nirvana beyond anything imaginable at home.

As a student at the Royal Academy of Music, institutionally hostile to New Music during the mid-50s, Cardew had already put himself out on a limb by mounting performances of 'dangerous' post-serial works like Boulez's two-piano *Structures* (with Richard Rodney Bennett) and *Le Marteau Sans Maître* (for which, assuming no British guitarist would be up to Boulez's technical demands, he learnt the instrument himself from scratch). In Cologne, however, Cardew was finding his daily encounters with Stockhausen maddening and far less liberating than he had anticipated.

"I have been rather an island in the sea of Stockhausen disapproval," Cardew reported home as Stockhausen's magical elixir began to evaporate. Disillusionment set in slowly, but accelerated as his critique became ever more pointed. In a later bulletin home, Cardew even referred to Stockhausen as "Führer", and complained about his habit of "pronouncing everything that others do as really too, too simple to be worth listening to." Moreover, he found the deferential, near-cult adoration Stockhausen demanded from anyone entering his orbit highly unpalatable and disconcerting. "The church militant in its worst guise," he wrote.

Personal friction aside, Stockhausen recognised in Cardew a quality that would blossom during *Treatise*'s painful gestation period and sustain him through his future stylistic repositionings: that he had unerring intuition for what symbols, when placed on manuscript paper, could best motivate musicians to *play* – and *think* about the sounds they were producing. Although *Carré* is rarely considered top-notch Stockhausen, even by aficionados, Cardew reportedly found the premiere disheartening. "It seemed not even Karlheinz was convinced of the validity of the indications in the score, and was therefore inclined to lay down the piece like a law," he wrote in a review published by *The Musical Times* which worked towards a stinkingly damning conclusion. "The piece was nurtured up to the point when each orchestra was rehearsing separately... but thereafter it was bullied in atavistic maturity, realising only a fraction of its musical potential." Cardew's charge – that Stockhausen's notation was inadequate to express the grandeur of his vision – was extremely serious. Instead of enabling The NDR Symphony Orchestra to play, musicians and singers had become slaves to Stockhausen's ego. He was attempting to motivate through the fear of failure.

When Cardew acted on this realisation by crossing the floor of the ideological house, shifting his allegiance largely away from Europe and towards American New Music – especially the various open-form, graphic and indeterminate techniques of New York School composers like John Cage, Morton Feldman, Earle Brown and Christian Wolff, plus La Monte Young – it was his first strike of many against, as he saw it, a shifty elite acting in self-interest.

But was Cardew treating Stockhausen even-handedly? Visionary composers who question idiomatic limits, as their burgeoning concepts of harmony and timbre rub against the accepted instrumental grain, have ordinarily been vindicated by history. Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge*, Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, Stravinsky's *Rite Of Spring* and everything Varèse wrote, existed in necessary creative tension with established protocols, and with the desire of instrumentalists to feel technically secure when performing. Cardew made no complaint about that. Instead he was pursuing a line of thought

Cornelius Cardew, circa mid-60s

that could potentially inflict far more damage. He was questioning whether Stockhausen's elaborate, labour-intensive means justified ends which cut musicians out of a meaningful engagement in the creative process. He was giving an early public airing to doubts about Stockhausen's autocratic self-importance – an Achilles heel that would bring disastrous consequences in the last three decades of the German maestro's career.

Although the New York School had rampant egos of its own, Cardew found the basic guiding principles espoused by Cage, Feldman and their fellow travellers – reconnecting composers and instrumentalists, allowing sound room to breathe along its natural grain – were positive and inclusive, allowing him the clean aesthetic break that he had been seeking from Stockhausen's controlling cul de sac. In Feldman's piano piece *Intermission 6* (1953), disjointed notes hang against fragmented, broken staves that trip higgledy-piggledy across and around the page. "The composition begins with any sound and proceeds to any other," Feldman writes, inviting the pianist (or pianists) to zone into a fabric of soft, sustaining sounds and generate their own structure from listening to the moment. The fantastical geometry of wavering horizontal and vertical lines in Brown's milestone graphic score *December 1952*, and the uncoordinated instrumental parts of Cage's indeterminate *Concert For Piano And Orchestra* (1958), were not merely sets of directions about when, where and how to place fingers on an instrument. By being responsive to their needs as creative artists, these composers' notational strategies made musicians responsible for their sounds.

La Monte Young's conceptual works like *Piano Piece For David Tudor No 1* (with its instruction to feed a bale of hay to a piano – or, then again, you might not want to) and *X For Henry Flynt* (here the performer is required to repeat a loud sound of their choosing as uniformly as possible over a long duration), also fuelled Cardew's imagination, and in 1962 he mused: "Does anything happen in La Monte's pieces? That is impossible to predict... I find that I require all the resources I possess and often more to perform a piece by La Monte... It is necessary to withdraw to an unusual distance and allow the piece to speak."

In response, Cardew's music went through immediate, indelible change. As recently as 1958 his densely written *Piano Sonata No 3* had been a nothing-special, boffin-minded satellite to Stockhausen's *Klavierstucke* and Boulez's *Piano Sonata No 2*. However, New York School ideologies licensed him to breathe air through his notation and liberate his music from the supremacy of the written score and a domineering 'composerly' voice. On the page, Cardew's *Octet '61 For Jasper Johns* resembles Feldman's *Intermission 6*. Like Feldman, Cardew displays his material – 60 so-called 'musical events' ranging from single notes to obliquely spaced three-note chords and abstracted perspectives on conventional notation – over mobile-like stave fragments. What to make of, for instance, symbol 35, with an arrow pointing dramatically upwards from the middle note, and a top E qualified with a flat *and* a sharp accidental? Or number 37, which looks like two conventional note heads scored through with a cross? Reaching a considered conclusion about any of these symbols is not yet enough to make music. The players must listen inside the sounds provoked by Cardew's symbols and fit them into an evolving sonic environment.

In *Autumn '60*, Cardew lets musicians dovetail their own material into the unfolding soundscape, as long as the context supplied by his original material never entirely disappears. Again, players must listen carefully to ensure a balance is maintained. In the super-refined *Piece For Guitar (For Stella)* (1961), the guitarist decides how to transform and repeat the 16 'source' modules Cardew has sketched: some rich in tonal allusion, others like an atonal white canvas. If *Corre* was a 'text' – one that, given its obscure difficulties, was always likely to be more definitive than any single performance – Cardew instead was defining a sliding scale between absolutes and more pliable rules that required thought and interpretation. The score was no longer a given, but a conduit for sound.

Not that anyone looking at the published score of *Treatise* could mistake it for anything other than a 'music thing'. Open any one of the 193 pages at random and the eye becomes drawn to two clear-cut strata of activity. Filling the top two-thirds of each page is a slipstream of intricately etched graphic symbols that insinuate sound without instructing you what to play – there are circles overlapping circles, small circles spooning against larger spheres; elongated and squashed notes hanging off broken-up staves; notes that melt against flat signs with and without a clef to indicate their pitch, staves that broaden beyond their customary five lines, sometimes to as many as 40 lines. Some of these graphically extended staves have patternings that crinkle along their width like a Mexican wave. The small, hollow circles that characterise the earlier pages are recapitulated later in the piece, but have been transformed into monolithic jet-black circles. All these elements – and many others too – are intercut, overlapped and spliced together, with tremendous 'speed' or approaching near stasis. The intensity of *Treatise*'s graphic brilliance and the vividness of Cardew's fantasy on conventional notation is testament to his internal wrestling with the means of how people express musical language.

The second element the eye alights upon is a simple but more enigmatic gesture. Circumnavigating the bottom of each page is a blank stave that represents... what? The most grounding of all notational conventions, a stave is like the canvas on which composers paint contours of notes. There is a convergence of opinion that Cardew meant it to represent the perspective of the listener (or reader) of his score, a still point around which everything else travels. It makes you fall towards sound, signifying that this imagined music journeys forward in a continuum of time.

A digression. Type 'Cornelius Cardew' into the internal search engine at the London Sinfonietta website and the message comes back: "Your search yielded no results." Nor has Cardew sparked interest among other stalwarts of the UK New Music scene: his music isn't conducted by Oliver Knussen or performed by The Arditti Quartet, or ever spoken about by composers playing the generic mainstream like George Benjamin, James MacMillan and Thomas Ades. Since Cardew's dreadful, still somewhat murky death in 1981, the victim of a hit-and-run car accident, the classical establishment has tried to ensure that Cardew's bothersome, disobedient legacy died with him.

But he refuses to go quietly. John Tilbury's lavishly detailed, discursive 1000-page biography, published in 2008, is the Rosetta Stone of Cardew scholarship, throwing up as many questions as it answers. A dedicated Cardew weekend at the ICA this month, cannily entitled Play For Today, follows performances of *Treatise* last July, led by composer John Lely at

Courtesy The Drawing Room (Cardew: *Treatise*) © Hinrichsen Edition, Peters Edition Ltd, London (*Treatise*)

The Drawing Room in East London. From a 2009 perspective, the idea that a culture once existed which could produce a work of art like *Treatise* is inspiring. A figure hitting out at the heart of the contemporary composition world today would be ruthlessly frogmarched to the margins – but even after the provocation of *Treatise*, Cardew was still respected by some at the BBC and was discussed earnestly on Radio 3, while sections from his other large scale piece *The Great Learning* were programmed at the Proms in 1972. Cardew's profile during the 1970s nails the lie that our present New Music scene is more 'inclusive' and that composers 'can write anything'. In fact, the boundaries of what orchestras and other classical institutions, who tend to favour short and amenable showpieces, deem 'acceptable' has never been so narrow and judgmental.

And the existence of *Treatise* shines revealing light on the generation of New Music composers who were born around the time of Cardew's death. He was 31 when *Treatise* was completed, but no composer of that age today feels equipped to probe so forensically the ethics by which music is created and performed. Cardew's legacy demarcates a faultline down the middle of British music. On one side, the frantic sexing-up and repackaging of sterile mainstream 'New Music' with little to say. On the other, musicians who are posing questions about contemporary music and society, about whether music is best served through improvisation or notation (and if so, then what sort?), all of whom are obliged to exist without support or reward – like the ensemble Apartment House (who recorded a disc of Cardew chamber works on Eddie Prévost's Matchless label in 2001), the sound artist Lee Patterson, composer John Lely, pianists Ian Pace and Tania Chen, harpist Rhodri Davies and guitarist Alan Thomas.

No one pretends that Cardew's legacy is easy to grasp, or possible to embrace in its totality. His immersion in revolutionary politics – initially as a member of the Mao-worshipping Communist Party of England (Marxist-Leninist) and, when the truth about Mao outed, as a supporter of Albanian Communist leader Enver Hoxha – did his music few favours. Pieces like *Treatise* and *The Great Learning*, and their essential 'whither music?' questions, were jettisoned in favour of politburo-endorsed songs for the Party like "Long Live Chairman Mao", "Smash The Social Contract" and "Revolution Is The Main Trend". Even when Cardew sought permission from the Party, as the rules stated he must, to write concert music, the crude faux-Beethovenian socialist realism of the solo piano *Thälmann Variations* (1974) and *We Sing For The Future* (1980), and the dire *Boolavogue* (1981) for two pianos, find him freeloading off a dimmed residue of technique. But if you find Cardew irreconcilably tainted by his political associations, and *Treatise* of minor interest, the questions it raises – about the expressive burnout of conventional notation, and composer/performer hierarchies – remain central to any discussion of New Music and, indeed, any form of 'new music'. Had Cardew's message truly been heeded, would we again be facing the same stuffy non-acceptance that Cardew moved against at the Royal Academy of Music during the mid-1950s?

When Cardew began to associate with the musicians of free improv collective AMM – including Eddie Prevost (drums), Keith Rowe (guitar), Lou Gare (saxophone) and Christopher Hobbs (percussion) – shortly after the group was established in 1965, he came with an agenda: he wanted them to perform *Treatise*. AMM represented a polar opposite from his experience conjuring up a notation for *Carre*, and Cardew found himself willingly sucked into the group's methodology of purist improvisation, a music that stressed the collective centring of sound above individual contributions. The music Cardew improvised with AMM, playing piano and cello, was the most genuinely 'free' of his career. It defined his golden period.

What happened next was either an artistic tragedy or a positive move for class warfare, depending on your point of view. Cardew and Rowe attempted to impose a Maoist agenda onto AMM that caused an ideological split, and a similar chasm engulfed The Scratch Orchestra, the part-amateur, part-professional experimental orchestra that Cardew had originally set up along utilitarian lines. As the Party took over his life, Cardew came to view music only as a tool in the revolutionary struggle, individualist bourgeois nonsense like *Treatise* propped up oppression, and it was now, in 1974, that Cardew chose to issue his notorious polemic *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism*. Cardew had traded one type of control (compositional hyper-organisation) for another (political dogma), and music lost out. Not that Cardew saw it in those terms – he was fighting a war, and during wartime normal life must be suspended.

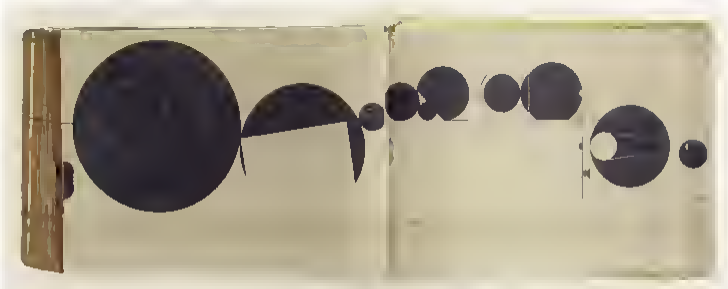
Treatise bridged this trajectory between control and freedom. The work advances an ethic of music making that transcends the laying-on of rules with a trowel. Musicians must internalise Cardew's symbols, while devising rules relevant to their own situation that might, or might not, evolve as required. But this freedom came with responsibility. Cardew's graphic score ought to provoke a response distinct from the lingua franca of free improvisation – although *Treatise* is often performed by improvisors, its purpose is to channel musicians towards a transforming pool of sounds and gestures that might not occur through the machinations of improvisation. The philosophical backbone of *Treatise* came from Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* ('Tractatus' translates as 'Treatise'), a discourse about logic and the limits of language. Cardew applied that same thesis to sound.

As *Treatise* filters inside the subconscious, a moment arrives when one begins metamorphosing the symbols into sounds. Should individual symbols be allocated a specific musical gesture, like a trill, tremolo or a staccato point of articulation? What to make of the numbers Cardew drops inside his graphics – are these durations, potential voicings of chords, intensities of attack? Cardew's original intention was to leave his notation wholly openended, but he was persuaded to publish his *Treatise Handbook* in 1971, which itself grew into a philosophical text about sound and notation, written as a series of statements in the manner of Wittgenstein.

Cardew begins by defining notation and its function: "A composer who hears sounds will try to find a notation for sounds. One who has ideas will find one [a notation] that expresses his ideas, leaving their interpretation free, in confidence that his ideas have been accurately and concisely notated." Then an elaboration: "Notation is a way of making people move. If you lack others, like aggression or persuasion. The notation *should* do it." When performing *Treatise*, "the sound should be a picture of the score, not vice versa".

Cardew then discusses how sound can be visually represented on paper. He concedes that musical symbols like the dynamic indications of *p* (quiet) and *f* (loud), and treble and bass clefs, "are important indices for many of the basic elements", but that in a graphic score 'how to get rid of them is the problem". He chides the pianist and composer Frederic Rzewski for suggesting that the published score of *Treatise* is "ideal for measuring". But measuring would impose the metric regularity of bars and tempo. Instead Cardew proposes "interpretative measurement".

The idea of interpretative measurement has special resonance for the circles that pervade *Treatise*. Under normal circumstances, a circle – that is, a note head – *is* a sound. A circle that has been filled in (a crotchet, or quarter note) is played twice as fast as an open circle with a stem (a minim, or half note). However, portraying a circle graphically, as a metaphor for sound, creates a notational oxymoron. By definition, circles circle back on themselves, but Cardew's empty stave reminds us that music must always move forwards in time. A tart visual dissonance that the eye hears and the ear must see coming, then confront. ☐ Cornelius Cardew: Play For Today exhibition is at London's Drawing Room from 5 November. A symposium, Play For Today: Cornelius Cardew, takes place at London ICA on 24–25 November. see Out There



Pages 133–34 of Cardew's original *Treatise* score (1963–67)

Four decades on from his recorded debut, saxophonist/reeds player and jazz composer **Henry Threadgill** is still inventing new compositional strategies for unusual ensembles. Here he talks to **Hank Shteamer** about the impetus for constant evolution behind his work with Air, The Sextett, Very Very Circus, Zooid and more. Photography by **Drew Jarrett**

Discussing the perils of artistic stasis, Henry Threadgill sounds like a man who's seen a ghost. "You can stay in one language for a very long time and create a lot," says the veteran composer-improvisor, sipping a macchiato in a bakery near his apartment in New York's East Village. "But you start to get weary, and all of your habits start to form a big mirror. It's like this mirror starts to physicalise itself in front of you in time; the longer you stay in a language – you see the parts coming together, click click, click. And then you don't want to sit there. Every time you come up, there you are in the mirror. You don't want to be in a mirror."

Threadgill, 65, has never remained in a mirror for long. In fact, you'd have to look to a titan like Miles Davis to find another American musician who has remained so fiercely committed to constant reinvention over such an extended period. Since Threadgill's 1969 recording debut, he has led or co-led a series of ingenious and highly durable ensembles, each one unique in style, instrumentation and improvisational strategy. Including the groundbreaking collaborative trio Air, The Sextett – a septet that behaved like an orchestra – and the guitar- and tuba-driven Very Very Circus. The only thing more impressive than Threadgill's knack for forging such singular groups is his willingness to disband them as soon as they've run their course.

Given Threadgill's relentless progressive streak, it's something of a surprise to find him now re-emerging with Zooid, the same group he debuted on his last widely available release, 2001's *Up Popped The Two Lips*. But Zooid 09-style, heard on the new *This Brings Us To, Volume 1* (Pi Recordings) is an entirely different animal from the 2001 group. Threadgill hasn't merely overhauled the personnel – only guitarist Liberty Ellman and trombonist/tuba player Jose Davila remain from the original line-up, he's devised an entirely new compositional strategy.

"It's an intervallic language that's kind of like serialism," he explains. "We move from one series of intervals to another throughout a piece. So let's say the first series has five intervals in it, the next has seven intervals in it, the next has three, and on and on like that. Those intervals are what control everything at that time: the harmony, the voice leading, the melodic line, everything is moving, not necessarily with every one of those intervals being used, but that pool of intervals. And the improvisation is coming from there also."

Threadgill's system may seem complex, but all he's trying to do is protect his sidemen from their own musical habits – to keep them out of the mirror, as it were. "With this new language, you're forced to play ideas rather than licks and patterns," he continues. "The traditional harmonic stuff from the major/minor language is not there, so you can't play all that stuff that people generally play. You have to create more in the moment, really fresh ideas in the moment – there's no formulas that you can apply. You got to be puttin' people in a situation where they can't even use that stuff that they had. That's the best situation."

The composer's assertion is borne out by *This Brings Us To*. Threadgill's latest language yields a uniquely multifaceted approach to small-group improvisation that does right by Zooid's name. The word refers to an independent cell inside a larger organism, and the quintet's multicentric sound – "Kind of like an octopus", he suggests – simulates this. If *Up Popped The Two Lips* foregrounded Threadgill's eccentric compositional voice, the latest record shows off the special kind of interactivity engendered by his new musical system.

On *This Brings Us To*, his pieces set soloists against a constantly shifting backdrop. "To Undertake My Corners Open" features a strange sort of cubistic mid-tempo groove, furiously funky and yet unfettered by easily discernible rhythmic cycles. As Davila cuts loose on trombone, Ellman, bassist Stomu Takeishi and drummer Elliot Humberto Kavee swarm subtly around him, each plotting his own course without upsetting the overall flow. The distinction between lead and accompanying voices disintegrates, resulting in a teeming, alluringly hypnotic contrapuntal blur. Sparser pieces, such as "White Wednesday Off The Wall", achieve a poetic quietude. Here the players concentrate on tiny gestures reminiscent of lowercase improv. In their slow, meditative interaction, one can clearly hear their staunch commitment to Threadgill's ethos of shedding formulas and concentrating on the moment. This micro-detailed collectivity is the real sound of Zooid's current incarnation, and in that sense, *This Brings Us To* showcases the leader more as a philosopher than as a bandleader.

Considering the composer's early exposure to Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), it's no wonder Threadgill is still committed to the idea of fostering individuality within a group. Born in 1944, Threadgill grew up on the South Side of Chicago, where, as he relates to George E Lewis in the latter's landmark AACM history, *A Power Stronger Than Itself*, he was surrounded by classic jazz (Ellington, Basie) and blues (Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf) from an early age. After picking up the saxophone as a teenager, he gained experience in polka and Dixieland bands. But it was a chance early 60s meeting with future Art Ensemble Of Chicago member Joseph Jarman in the cafeteria of Wilson Junior College that really opened Threadgill's mind. "I knew that this was not a regular guy here," Threadgill recalls in the book. Threadgill and Jarman quickly formed a study group with another formidably irregular musician, composer and saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell, and around the same time the three began attending rehearsals of Muhal Richard Abrams's Experimental Band, which later fed into the AACM. "In that circle there was a broad resource of information being exchanged and previewed," Threadgill told journalist Ted Panken in a 1996 radio interview accessible at jazzhouse.org. "Somebody could tell you about listening to this person play music from some other country, or avail you of information to go hear concerts by The Chicago Symphony or The Chicago Chamber Players

Henry Threadgill at DeRobertis Caffe, New York City, August 2009

The Sextett in New York City 1979 (left to right) Craig Harris Fred Hopkins, Olu Dara, Threadgill Diedre Murray John Betsch Pheeroan AkLaff

"You'd turn on the radio and every station was Country and Western. Oh, God yeah, I sure did hate it. But that was a very good exercise, because I had to challenge my own limitations"

With Steve McCall (drums) and Fred Hopkins (bass) in Air Chicago, 1974

or anything of that nature. It was not exclusively jazz any more. It was music."

Threadgill eventually left Chicago to work with a travelling evangelism troupe, and in 1966 he joined the army, an experience which allowed him to hone his skills as an arranger in St Louis and Kansas City before being transferred to Vietnam.

Zooid's consummately democratic approach can be traced directly to Air, the trio with which Threadgill first found wide acclaim. Formed in Chicago in the early 70s, following Threadgill's 1969 discharge from the military, the group also included bassist Fred Hopkins and drummer Steve McCall. Threadgill might have done most of the writing, but he took great care to see that each player was featured equally. The result was one of the great collaborative outfits in jazz history. The trio is best remembered for *Air Lore*, an excellent 1979 album featuring tight yet bracingly raw arrangements of jaunty classics by Scott Joplin and Jelly Roll Morton. But Air's greatest triumphs are Threadgill originals such as "Keep Right On Playing Thru The Mirror Over The Water" – an epic, abstract ballad driven not by melody but by unaccompanied features for McCall's tumbling, free-time percussion – and group efforts like "Suisse Air", a funky, playful piece built around Hopkins's gnarled vamps and Threadgill's work on hubkaphone, a kind of makeshift vibraphone fashioned from discarded hubcaps, which he has picked up again in recent years, as on 2003's intriguing limited edition Zooid LP, *Pap Start The Tape, Stop*.

Following McCall's departure in the early 80s, Threadgill – by now based in New York – kept Air alive in various incarnations stretching through the middle of the decade. By then he had already started X-75. His first venture as a nominal bandleader, X-75 were a drummerless nonet with four woodwind players, four bassists and a vocalist that recorded one compelling album in 1979 before disbanding. The next Threadgill project, though, was a true keeper in the spirit of Air: a seven-piece 'little big band' called first The Sextet and later The Sextett. The group's output, documented on six studio LPs between 1981 and 1988, is staggeringly rich – 1983's *Just The Facts And Pass The Bucket*, in particular. Its standout track "Gateway" is a tempestuous, tango-flavoured fantasia that cycles through several gripping themes before giving way to a witty yet scorching Threadgill solo on alto sax. The album also features the lush, bighearted fanfare "Black Blues", while the humid, elegiac title track summons a stylised nostalgia that could have made Charles Mingus jealous. Several of The Sextett's other sessions, including 1987's *Easily Slip Into Another World* and 1988's *Rag, Bush And All*, also rank as lost classics from a decade often accused of being a troubled one for jazz. Fortunately, some of The Sextett's material, along with albums by Air, X-75, Very Very Circus and more, will be reissued in early 2010 by Mosaic Records as part of *The Complete Novus & Columbia Recordings Of Henry Threadgill & Air*.

Threadgill's transition from Air to The Sextett, another group that was similarly durable, prolific and wide-ranging, was no accident. Even as he remains focused on evolution, he places a premium on longevity and depth. "These are not hasty things," he notes, reflecting on his various bandleading ventures. "When you find a language or a way to create, you should be able to create there for some time. If not, you need to question why you would create in this particular situation. You're gonna drill here, get enough gold or enough oil here for a while, or whatever you're going to get out of here. If you're gonna stay there, come up with something. That's the way I've treated my musical time from group to group. I work for as long as I work with one particular group, then when I feel like I'm at the end of the road, I automatically start hearing the next musical situation. I start hearing the next orchestration, the next group, what instruments and sounds. They just seem to come. They done it so far. I don't know how long I'll be on Earth, but that has always worked in the past. I start to hear a new plan or possibilities with certain instruments, and generally I'm finished writing music a certain way, too. I don't have a history of going from group to group, playing any music that I've played before, or anything similar to it, but no one has written in any great detail about how the music of Air is different from the music of The Sextett, or X-75, or how that music is different from Very Very Circus. It's not like I just move on and keep doing music the same way."

One factor that has remained constant among Threadgill's various endeavours is his gritty virtuosity as a soloist. He's worked extensively on various reeds and flute, as well as hubkaphone and its relative the hubkawall, but it's his performances on alto sax that thrill most. His trademark sound on the horn – bracingly tart, with a focus on clipped rhythms and skilfully integrated overblown wails – is as captivating on *This Brings Us To* as on his vintage classics. For Threadgill, perfecting his chops while at the same time keeping his work conceptually fresh isn't always easy. "When I'm writing, I'm generally working as long as it takes to finish whatever I'm doing, and then I get back to just practising," he says. "Because I don't practise that much when I'm writing, and that's the problem. It's a very difficult thing to balance."

Fortunately Threadgill has proven remarkably adept at maintaining both facets of his art, while at the same time infusing it with an uncommonly evocative literary element. Frequently, his surreal titles seem to allude to an arcane personal mythology: "Great Body Of The Riddle Or Where Were The Codge Boys When My Clay Started To Slide" (from Air's 1975 debut, *Air Song*), "Soft Suicide At The Baths" (on the 1981 Sextet release *When Was That?*), and "The Devil Is On The Loose And Dancin' With A Monkey" (from *Rag, Bush And All*). A poem that accompanies Threadgill's 2001 CD *Everybodys Mouth's A Book* features equally strange yet vivid imagery: "Pink pee/Running from a pink saxophone/Strong as airplane glue." When asked about his way with words, the composer is exceedingly modest. "It's just like children," Threadgill asserts. "People have names for kids they haven't even seen yet. When my oldest daughter was born, the doctors kept coming out and saying, 'How come the baby doesn't have a name?' I don't even know the goddamn baby – what you talkin' about? How can I tell you the baby's name if I don't even know her? Give me time to find out who this person is and find out what their name is. I'll ask her what is her name and then she'll tell me. And if she doesn't, then maybe I can come up with a name. Art is the same way for me."

Threadgill's skills as a composer, improvisor and linguistic fantasist have rarely aligned so winningly as in Very Very Circus, which debuted on 1990's *Spirit Of Nuff ... Nuff* and endured for the first half of the decade. The group's output was every bit as weird and vibrant as their name and instrumentation, built around two electric guitars and two tubas. At their best, on 1993's *Too Much Sugar For A Dime*, The Circus came off as one of the most vital, well-integrated jazz rock fusion experiments ever attempted. Threadgill had performed brilliantly on *Memory Serves*, the 1981 debut by avant groove outfit Material, and he later kept up a fruitful relationship with the group's bassist Bill Laswell, who tapped Threadgill for the 1987 Sly & Robbie record *Rhythm Killers* and went on to co-produce *Too Much Sugar*. The latter album's opening track, "Little Pocket Size Demons", is a genre-bending classic and one of Threadgill's finest recorded moments. The piece marries a fiery staccato theme reminiscent of The Sextett to a steely art funk groove and tops it with volcanic, Metallic shredding from guitarist Brandon Ross. "Demons" and other Very Very Circus landmarks such as "Like It Feels" – from 1995's *Mokin' A Move*, which also included a sampling of Threadgill's poignant chamber works – demonstrated that the composer could meaningfully incorporate new genres without diluting them, or for that matter, diluting his innate compositional voice.

After coming off like a born jazz rocker on *Too Much Sugar For A Dime*, Threadgill spotlighted a festive Latin music element on 1995's *Carry The Day*. One reason he's been so successful at assimilating diverse genres is that he's trained himself to find the good in every style, even those that initially leave him cold. In a 1998 interview with journalist Dan Ouellette, Threadgill discussed how in the 1960s, when his army duties brought him to Junction City, Kansas, he grappled with his distaste for Country music. "Oh God – yeah, I sure did hate it," recalls Threadgill with a rueful laugh. "You'd turn on the radio and every station was Country and Western. That could've been anything. I'm not good with the same thing on every station. I don't give a damn what kind of music it is – I'm not good with that. Even though I grew up in Chicago listening to some Country and Western, it certainly wasn't one of the things I was attracted to. I'd rather listen to Polish music or music from Serbia than listen to that. But I said, 'Well, I can't listen to anything else, other than playing records.' That was a very good exercise, because I had to challenge my own limitations. I had to confront my own limitations

The Henry Threadgill Sextet *Just The Facts And Pass The Bucket* (1983)

about what I like. I said, 'Well, I only like hot dogs.' 'Well, here, try the hamburger.' 'No, I only like hot dogs.' I'm just like, 'Can you give me a hot dog with sauerkraut on it, or maybe mustard? You can even give me some baby hot dogs. You can fry 'em, boil 'em, broil 'em, steam 'em, stew 'em, but just give me a hot dog.' So I just had to say, 'OK, drop it, Henry – drop it, drop it, drop it.' And then I started hearing some things that musically were informative. And then I even heard some pieces that I liked, and I got much closer to understanding and being able to appreciate parts of that music that I had never been able to appreciate before, which certainly helped later on. Because years after that I had to go write a show at Harvard, at the theatre there, and I had to write some Country and Western songs...and if I hadn't had that experience from the mid-60s when I was in the army, I would have had a very difficult time."

Since not all developing musicians are such keen autodidacts, Threadgill can't help but worry that students enrolled in institutionalised jazz programmes are missing out. "I don't think they really need to teach jazz," he asserts. "I think they need to teach music. Because they made jazz small, they pinholed it, and they qualified what they think jazz is. They don't teach anything about what I do. They don't teach anything about what Cecil Taylor does. So what are they teaching? They've excluded so many people in the educational process, so what does that say? See...if you're gonna teach Bach, you have to teach Wagner. If you're gonna teach Wagner, you have to teach Schoenberg. If you teach Schoenberg, then you're gonna have to teach Stravinsky, or Varèse or anybody else. You can't exclude. In these jazz programmes, they exclude."

Threadgill's staunchly inclusive attitude stretched through the 90s and on into the present day. After Very Very Circus ran its course, the composer carried guitarist Ross with him into his next project, Make A Move. The group married Ross's incendiary lines to the exotic strains of Tony Cedras's accordion, which alluded to music from South America and Africa...as well as India, where Threadgill established a residency with his wife and young daughter in the mid-90s. While there, Threadgill communicated only via fax machine. "I know what the telephone, television and the mailbox have done to our lives," he told Dan Ouellette. "That's why I had to get out of the city." Make A Move were less prolific than previous Threadgill groups, issuing only 1996's dreamy yet intensely expressive *Where's Your Cup?* and 2001's *Everybodys Mouth's A Book*, released by PI at the same time as the Zooid debut. But the group's adventurous and often funky stylistic mix, along with the driving, infectious pulse of Society Situation Dance Band – a live-only big band active during the 1980s and 90s; check YouTube for some truly mindblowing footage – helped pave the way for Zooid's strange, sublimated grooves.

As fulfilling and fresh as Zooid's *This Brings Us To, Volume 1* sounds, it's hard not to wonder if Threadgill is already plotting his next evolutionary scheme. "I'm completely happy with the way the group is operating," counters Threadgill. "It's operating like it just started – the excitement. All you need to do is lose the interest and excitement in one person and you start to have a problem...and as a leader, you try to solve that problem, and you generally give people as much time as you can give them until you might have to let them go. But they could actually do enough damage to the group that you just have to let the whole thing go, because the communication, camaraderie and excitement can be destroyed very easily, and people have to be above all kinds of issues. I mean every kind of human issue. Not to say that musicians do not have to deal with life in terms of paying their rent and all that, but you have to be above all that when it's time for music.

"When the group is not above all that, you haven't really got a group, as far as I'm concerned," he continues. "You've got some people that function as a group, but they're not really a great group. The aesthetic that I come from, I'm not coming from any kind of Western concept. This is about abandonment. You're completely into it, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. It's the same requirement to be on a great basketball team. You can't come in there and have your mind on certain things and think that that team is gonna operate on the highest level. Those teams that we saw like the [Chicago] Bulls, they were operating damn near with blindfolds on. You couldn't even see the communication, it was so fast and so quick. That's where it has to be musically."

But that unforgiving mirror could materialise in front of Threadgill any day, and thus he never seals himself off to the possibility of change. He cites as a role model a composer who's been at it even longer than he has. "About a year ago I was talking to Elliott Carter," Threadgill says. "He had a concert, and I'm sitting in front of him. I asked him in the course of the conversation what he was doing, and he said, 'Something new! What else?' I said, 'Damn, there you go.' He's 98, 99 years old – that's it! 'Something new.' And his music has changed a lot in these last years. In this particular period of his life, as he approached 100, all of a sudden, the language got real thin. His music thinned out, and he just cut out a lot of things, and cut to the chase more or less. And that's really what you want to do, you know what I'm saying? Find a new way of expressing yourself, a new language. Because a new language is everything." ☐ Henry Threadgill Zooid's *This Brings Us To, Volume 1* is out now on PI Recordings.

Courtesy Jonathan Crawford collection

"The aesthetic I come from is not any kind of Western concept This is about abandonment. You're completely into it, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually"

Punk-pagan, antiquary and cultural irritant,

Julian Cope

is a future-primitive polymath. **Rob Young** visits his rural hideout to hear about practical magic, the post-Edisonian music of his new group Black Sheep, and what it takes to be an Odinist rock 'n' roller.

Photography by Jake Walters

"A rude childlike way of recognising the divineness of Nature, the divineness of Man, most rude, yet heartfelt, robust, gianthke, betokening what a giant of a man this child would grow to!'
Thomas Carlyle *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, And The Heroic In History* (1841)

Almost as soon as he's greeted me in his kitchen, Julian Cope is shepherding me to the open doorway that looks out on the barns and fields immediately adjoining his property, and pointing out an elderly lady walking with her two cats. "She's the local witch," he informs me in reverent tones. "She walks across there every day and looks at me."

Since the mid-1990s, Cope and his family have lived in a charged sector of the English countryside. The pink-painted farmhouse where he lives, writes, records and runs his Head Heritage operation is a short drive from Avebury, Silbury Hill and the West Kennet Long Barrow, a complex of Neolithic stone circles, sacred roads and manmade mounds whose 'discovery' in the 18th century virtually kickstarted the English antiquarian movement. In the converted stable behind the house – whose den includes a bed made up with duvet covers and pillowcases emblazoned with images of Che Guevara – he wrote his own contribution to that movement, *The Modern Antiquarian*, published in 1998, and its follow-up, *The Megalithic European*, both compendious guides to prehistoric sites, each one painstakingly visited by Cope, documented, photographed and written about with the kind of learned enthusiasm that characterises the whole range of his output, musical, literary and otherwise.

It's usually *retired* pop stars that tuck themselves away on a country estate, but Cope is far from retired – or retiring, for that matter. If anything, the infectious zeal that began to mature around 1991's *Peggy Suicide* – just rereleased in a Universal/Island deluxe edition with extra material – and consolidated on the following year's *Jehovahkill*, has only intensified in recent years, in tandem with a seismic shift towards total self-sufficiency. Far from relaxing into a middle age as a published and respected writer, popping out the odd album of ballads when it suits, Cope has released some of his best solo work in years, including *Rome Wasn't Burned In A Day* (2003) and *Citizen Cain'd* (2005) – eclectic mixes of Teutonic hard rock, folky introspection, mysticism, Norse and pagan legend, and sloganeering worthy of MC5 manager John Sinclair. This year alone he's put out three major releases: a new bleeding chunk of wasted fuzz overload from his Brain Donor project; an album in his own name, *The Unruly Imagination*; and a double LP and double CD by his new 'folk'-primitive group, Black Sheep. The ramped-up activity coincides with an intensification of Cope's revolutionary fervour, explicitly aligning himself with a potent gallery of radical heroes/prophets, from the Barcelona anarchists and Che Guevara to English revolutionaries such as Gerrard Winstanley.

He's worn his warrior's heart on his studded sleeve ever since his famous participation, dressed as the seven-foot potato-headed Sqwubbsy – at the 1990 poll tax riots in London, and his desire to effect change – to unsettle himself as much as the nation – remains undimmed. "I plan to be around a revolution," he announces, "and that doesn't include staying here, because you can't have a house in the country and be a revolutionary. But the reason we came here was in order to give my kids what *I* had. I was brought up in a semi-detached house on the edge of the green belt [near Tamworth, north east of Birmingham]. Between our house and the next house, which was Polesworth, there were three miles and the only thing between us were redbrick farm cottages. So in order to give my kids something similar, I had to come here. My oldest child is now in London, and she wouldn't even thank me for this; my youngest is 15 and she loves it, but she can't wait to leave. We're going to stay here, I imagine, another two years, and then move. We haven't decided how we're going to do it. But I know that it's going to be an active culture thing that we're engaged on. [Cope's American wife] Dorien wants to buy a mobile library and drive round Britain, selling Britain to the British. She's a very erudite, sweet woman – I think people will take her more seriously simply because she's an outsider. You need someone to validate the locality."

Julian Cope has been validating the locality ever since he first began making music. Whether it's pondering the purpose of a trilithon, travelling to Armenia to unravel "the roots of monotheism" (his goal, he tells

Julian Cope at home in Yatesbury, Wiltshire, September 2009

me since 1989), or going on a busking tour of specific sites, as he did last year with Black Sheep – taking in such spots as the Eddie Cochran Memorial marking where the rocker died in a car crash near Chippenham, London statues of Thomas Carlyle and Wat Tyler, Marx's grave in Highgate Cemetery, and the Carl Jung statue in Liverpool – sense of place has always been of paramount importance. "When The Teardrops did a tour of America in 1981," Cope recalls, "I said we've got to do a gig in Lubbock [in Texas], because of Buddy Holly. When we got to Lubbock all these people were saying, 'Why are you here? It's such a nothing place.' 'Yeah, but Buddy Holly came from here.' 'Yeah, but he made a point of getting out of here as soon as he could.' I said, 'It can't be nothing, or Buddy Holly wouldn't have come from here. There must have been a spirit that informed Buddy Holly. You're bathing in the glow of Buddy Holly...'"

"Leperskin", on *Peggy Suicide*, contained the levelling lines about *"When the man in Lambeth Palace pays the same rates/As the man who has a flat in Acre Lane"* – lines directly inspired by the South London borough where Cope lived at the time. 1994's *Autogeddon* featured a song, "Paranormal Pt 1", recorded inside the main burial chamber of West Kennet Long Barrow with sometime Coil collaborator Thighpaulsandra. At other times, legend has it, he's imported a pulpit into the studio to achieve the requisite authoritative voice. Currently Black Sheep recordings are prefaced with a spoken marker of the date of provenance. As he said on another occasion, he is "one who writes only about that which he has visited".

His communion with place dates right back to the days of The Teardrop Explodes, when Cope was at the centre of a wave of Liverpool alternative music among the likes of Echo And The Bunnymen, The Mighty Wah! and Big In Japan, all of whom enjoyed chart penetration in a way that's unthinkable for an alternative Northern scene today. By 1982 the group had found mainstream success with singles such as "Treason" and "Reward", but Cope buckled under the pressure of touring and the eccentric behaviour endemic to the group, which split up at the end of that year. In his memoir *Head On*, Cope recalls recovering from psychic burnout at his parents' home in Tamworth and exploring the historic Midlands villages in the surrounding area. Meandering among the ruins of Alvecote Priory, a local beauty spot, he recalls playing there as a child: "This was the swamp and its Anglo-Saxon burial mound. It held great significance for my brother and me: we thought this ancient tract of land was inhabited by a spirit world and would tread carefully. Returning now, as a confused shell of an adult, the place seemed just as special." In the next few years, Cope would return repeatedly to Alvecote, to celebrate his marriage, and shoot videos and album covers, including the notorious sleeve of *Fried* (1985), where he crawls naked under the giant turtle shell on the Mound beneath a sky "classically English in its vague blue-grey cloudiness".

Here are hints that Cope's obsessive response to particular places, with their coiled, accumulated electricity, have been with him since a very early age. Even his notorious statement, which it took him many years to live down, about having taken so much acid at that time that he had "turned into a town centre", starts to look not quite so random: a town centre, after all, is itself a significant place, one which is passed through by all sectors of society, the place both town dwellers and those from the margins will all gravitate towards. It's a reminder that heresy begins *here*, in a place, with a dissenter speaking out against the norms of a small community.

"Growing up in a little town like Tamworth," he expounds, "I always feared that I was going to be Walter Mitty. And when I first went to Liverpool all these people accepted me: they didn't know I was from this tiny little town – they didn't know that I wasn't really posh – but I was actually the ultimate facsimile of posh: a child of two social climbers, a Welsh miner and a Midland potter. But I realised that you are the one you appear. So if I could hoodwink the whole Liverpool scene that I was some kind of fiery poet, maybe I *am* a fiery poet! It's like Axl says: use your illusion."

What Cope does now occurs with little fanfare. He doesn't actively seek press coverage and doesn't even have an official press agent any more. The reissues of his last releases on Island Records from the early 1990s, *Peggy Suicide* and *Jehovahkill*, take place without any great motivation on his part, not least because he's perpetually frustrated by numerous mistakes in the booklets. His contribution to Sunn O)))'s *White1* album, a rhapsodic ode to the ritual landscape outside his door and to the pagan echoes within the Doom genre, invoking the *"bad heavy metal of the heathen bells"*, went largely unremarked in reviews. He's not interested in resting on his laurels or celebrating past achievements. Look on his Head Heritage website, though, and you'll find a whole mess of righteous dust being kicked up. The site has accumulated into a fount of alternative knowledge and guerrilla know-how. Cope himself, as 'Lord Yatesbury', delivers a monthly 'Address Drudion', a stirring sermon that includes reviews of his rave records of the moment. The site is where most of his records are currently available, but there's also room for a U-Know section, which includes discussion forums on subjects ranging from Modern Antiquarianism to music to eco-activism and political direct action. At a time when protest is picking up pace again – witness the recent Climate Camp and anti-arms fair demonstrations in London – and in a year when *The Guardian* newspaper can run a serious article headlined "We're all pagans now", the site's info-mix is increasingly in tune with the times. If Public Enemy's late 80s harangues were dubbed 'the black CNN', Head Heritage and, by extension, the music made by Cope's new group Black Sheep are a kind of 'heathen Sky News'.

Ever since he imagined inhabiting the body of ancient Egypt's blasphemous, sun-worshipping pharaoh on "Akhenaten" (on *Jehovahkill*), heretical notions have been integral to Cope's lyrical concerns and public persona. He's clad, today, as every day, in greasy Gruppenführer attire: 1950s Luftwaffe cap, khaki string vest and combat trousers, sleeveless leather jacket, shades. He wears this uniform whether he's playing a Black Sheep gig or delivering a lecture at the British Museum. Looking like he does now is a highly conscious choice. "One of the things I love," he says, "is driving onto the M4 or M5, into the petrol station and gassing up and looking like a fucking lunatic. What I love about the whole English mindset is, most people are thinking 'Well, he's a fucking cunt.' Or, 'He thinks he's so great, who does he think he is, David Lee Roth?' As soon as you go with that, you virtually exclude yourself from further comment, 'cause you're just a mad bastard. And it's quite useful to look like [a prophet in the desert]. One of the things that punk taught me was, a black person who's being abused by racists – they can't not be black. But I could always go home and take my punk gear off. And the mere fact that I *can* means I'm never allowed to. I feel an absolute duty to just keep doing it. And I don't give a damn about being loved or hated because ultimately I can't know that – I can only do something that I feel is my truth. I've been lucky enough, for a start, to have a wife who is so obsessed with culture, with revolution, such an Anglophile, that she constantly invigorates me. When I was wearing the German hat, we'd be watching *The World At War*, and she'd be saying, 'Girls, listen to what Churchill's saying. If it wasn't for Churchill, everybody would be wearing your dad's hat!'"

Shaggy, leathered up and tattooed, eyes wrapped in Raybans and with military insignia rampant, Black Sheep look like a bunch of ranters and diggers you might have found playing off a flatbed truck outside the perimeter fence at the 1974 Stonehenge Free Festival. Like many of Cope's groups in the past, this one appears drawn from a gallery of complete unknowns, many of whom carry pseudonyms: Acoustika, Holy McGrail, Common Era, Antronhy Oh, Big Nige, Fat Paul, etc. Trading virtuosity for caveman enthusiasm, Cope leads his revolutionary cell in a series of extended jams, rarely departing from the simplest chord of them all, E minor. Primal pummelling comes from a battery of military marching drums, painted up by Cope with anarchist heraldry motifs.

A touchstone for Black Sheep's sound is The MC5, in the way that group spanned the gap between the cosmic myth-science of Sun Ra and the flag-waving 'We insist!' of herd-edged White Panther politics. But there's a time-travelling concept here, a form of sonic speculative fiction. "We're post-Edisonian," declares Cope, "it's really the sound of inchoate stumbling." Rather than forcing his troupe to fit a musical mould, he's happy to let their own abilities dictate the outcome. "You're creating in this massive rush and trying to excavate some kind of sense from that chaos. And that's the way I work all the time. Barf it out in chaos, and then orchestrate the chaos – that's how it's always worked for me."

Black Sheep have so far been heard on a double CD, *Block Sheep*, from early 2008, and a new double

"I love driving into the petrol station and gassing up and looking like a fucking lunatic. Most people are thinking: who does he think he is, David Lee Roth?'"

"Rock 'n' roll is a perfect Odinist form, because it's so motivated by the female, it has that element of cross-dressing, and yet it's totally fierce"

CD and LP (each containing slightly different track listings), *Kiss My Sweet Apocalypse*, whose scarlet and black packaging includes an 'outsider icon' calender featuring portraits of Carl Jung, Albert Einstein, Eddie Cochran, Emily Pankhurst, Joe Strummer and occultist/archaeologist TC Lethbridge. Their next release will be a collection of Scottish flavoured protest songs, produced by former Creation Records associate Joe Foster, entitled *The Learned Bastard Takes Precedence Over The Ignorant High Priest* – a quote, Cope gleefully points out, from no less an authoritative source than the Talmud.

Pressed to explain the "post-Edisonian" tag he elaborates: "When I first started Black Sheep, my idea was, wouldn't it be great to form a group called The Black Sheep, and I imagine it's 300 years from now, culture has finally come to a collapse, there's no electricity any more, and the people are worshipping everything from this time. They are, let's say, post-post-post-Nine Inch Nails. They want that sound, but electricity's so long gone, they don't even really know what it sounded like. The oral traditions have been handed down, so they know it must have sounded a little like this – a little like that. But all they can really do is run along touting solid-body Fender guitars, which have by now been repainted in various places where they have been battered. And in order to allude to rock 'n' roll volume, all they can do is get a whole bunch of marching drums and go to the nearest gorge, which has fantastic acoustics, and bash the hell out of it. They're dressed in what they imagine would be the sum total of rock 'n' roll outfits, and they have the bad guys, the bogeymen, the Guy Fawkes character, let's say one would be a George Dubya, and the other would be a Ronald McDonald. But the Ronald McDonald would be so pimped, that he would be almost unrecognisable by now."

So, The Black Sheep is a kind of Mummer's collective from a future age, a projected folk memory of rock from the post-technological dystopia of Riddley Walker. At an appearance at the Cambridge Folk Festival a couple of years ago, Cope silenced purists' objections to his presence by saying he played "folk with an umlaut over the O". The group's music celebrates Cope's heretical heroes, such as American 'singing poet' Vachel Lindsay, Baader-Meinhof, Che Guevara, Palestinian militant Leila Khaled, and La Pasionaria, the Basque communist and Spanish Republican.

The 28 minute "Kiss My Sweet Apocalypse" follows Cope's occasional *Rite* series of cosmic synth epics since 1993. Communal close harmony gives way to a lengthy Suicide-al throb, with Cope sluicing a tidal electronic wash from turntable and Mellotron. The last ten minutes feature a folky melodeon among the headlong tumble. Other topical Black Sheep tunes include "Bank Of England", "Psychedelic Odin", "The Shipwreck Of St Paul" and "James Naylor Enters Bristol On A Donkey, 1656", a celebration of the Quaker chief who rode into Bedminster in imitation of Christ's Palm Sunday entrance to Jerusalem, and was promptly arrested and tortured by the Puritan authorities for his heresy.

Cope is only nominally the frontperson of Black Sheep, which has various 'divisions', handling electronics and "blasphemous movies". Members are also free to release Black Sheep projects under their own names – most recently, *Heathen Frontiers In Sound*, by acoustic guitarist Christophe F, formerly of Newcastle's Universal Panzies. Cope is happy with this open arrangement as long as no one decides to indulge any reggae or Iron Maiden fantasies. "It's democratic probably the way Fidel would have had it," he says with a twinkle.

The Black Sheep ethos is also symptomatic of what Thomas Carlyle called "a great rude sincerity". The Victorian essayist used the phrase in a chapter of his book, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship And The Heroic In History* – a book on Cope's recent reading list, and which he urges me to read. As well as containing "the first non-racist essay about Mohammed" in Western culture, the book's principal attraction for Cope is the opening chapter on Scandinavian paganism, focusing on the Norse god Odin. Since he describes Black Sheep as a "female-informed Odinist troupe", Carlyle's assertion that the Norse myths have a rough-chiselled, rustic simplicity, in contrast to the Arcadian classical paganism of ancient Greece and the Mediterranean, is relevant to Cope's own project. The Norse gods were clumsy, dunderheaded, coarse and occasionally oafish, and it's this quality that informs the 'Odinist' Black Sheep. "Being an Odinist," says Cope, "is being a fierce warrior-poet, because Odin gave his name to the ode. Is being highly informed by female wisdom, but not informed by the scratchy bitchiness that tended to surround a lot of it as time went on. Being an Odinist is being singular, but knowing that you're enacting a thing that is the law because tradition deems it the law – therefore it can change. But also, when I say I'm an Odinist, the people that Odin is dealing with in the myths really inform what he does. And he's a blood brother of Loki. Loki's often called the trickster, but he's far more extreme. And in the *Lokasenna*, where Loki goes off on one in the mead hall, he accuses Odin of practising female magic, dressing like a woman and acting like a woman. And Odin hushes him up very quickly.

"Most Odinists," he goes on, "don't pay any attention to Odin in the myths. Their Odin is a generic Brian Blessed-like character, who's fierce and full of love, and writes some good poetry, and is a bit capricious. But if you read the Norse myths, the Odin of the myths – I hate to say it, but I reckon [Frankie Goes To Hollywood vocalist] Holly Johnson's quite a good Odinist: fierce, singular, poetic and has a really rich female side. That's why I think rock 'n' roll is perfectly placed as an Odinist form, because it's so motivated by the female, it has that element of cross-dressing, and yet it's totally fierce. We're lucky that the Norse myths haven't been picked clean by the scholars, because there's too much of the lager lout in them."

You'd be wrong to think that Cope is a historian manque, only now discovering his true métier after decades as a rocker. The way he tells it, his unique understanding of ancient sites and how the world-historical jigsaw fits together could *only* have come via the liberating experiences afforded by rock 'n' roll and psychedelic drugs. "One of the reasons I got obsessed with Doom music, was because Doom is part of... a heavy study of Doom is part of my book of the ancient law. As in the idea of free-dom, king-dom, 'dom' and 'doom' was always to do with judgment. So, the *Domesday Book* didn't originally mean we are all going to kill ourselves – it means you are going to meet your judgment. It's a ledger, and we're going to put in everything that you own. Which is why in Moscow the judgment seat is still called the Duma, in Iceland they don't kill people at Doom rings, they *judge* people at Doom rings. If you go to the centre of the Orkneys – again controlled by Northern tribes – right at the centre of one island is a loch, Loch

"Black Sheep are post-Edisonian – it's the sound of inchoate stumbling. Barf it out in chaos, and then orchestrate the chaos"

Dooming, and that's where they used to sit and make their judgments."

The sheer amount of learning on show during a conversation is breathtaking. Presently, Cope is equally prolific as an author as a musician. Having brought out *Japrocksampler* last year, he's currently got at least three book projects on the go: a personal selection of historical figures he designates prophets – characters, not necessarily heroes, who signalled tectonic shifts in human consciousness – including Zoroaster, Moses, St Paul, Martin Luther, Oliver Cromwell and Chairman Mao. Then there's a book about ancient law, based on an idiosyncratic but convincing theory about the convergence of mounds and high places and their old names that connect them with places of judgment. Oh, and he's working on a novel set in Sardinia.

All this, and music too... It must require considerable discipline, I suggest, keeping all these balls in the air. "What my job is... I'm doing something only because nobody else is in a position to do it. Nobody. I felt that the Japanese book had to be written not by a Japanophile, because they tend to love everything Japanese. I thought the most important thing was that it had to stand on its own – it had to be good, as opposed to just because it was Japanese."

Cope's first venture into publishing, *Krautrocksampler*, self-published in 1995, has become legendarily hard to find, and I asked him to confirm rumours that he never wants it reprinted. "No," he insists, "It's never gonna come out, because it's been superseded. It's a whole new generation that knows so much more about Krautrock than I did then. The most important thing is, I don't have that kind of ego. I'm not writing the truth, I'm writing the truth as it stands. The truth's a movable thing in our culture. All I wanted to say was, guys, you're all running around going, 'You can't use the word Krautrock, it might be xenophobic.' Well, you can't call it West German rock, because it ain't that – that would include The Scorpions, and they suck. Let's call it *Krautrocksampler*, because I can get away with it, you know I'm not a racist. At the same time, I was more interested to find out whether Krautrock had more than a poetic truth. It clearly did, because within about three years you had Krautrock sections in HMV. That's nothing to do with me. I've given it a kickstart, but it's not like everybody wasn't listening to Neu! before – I just codified it."

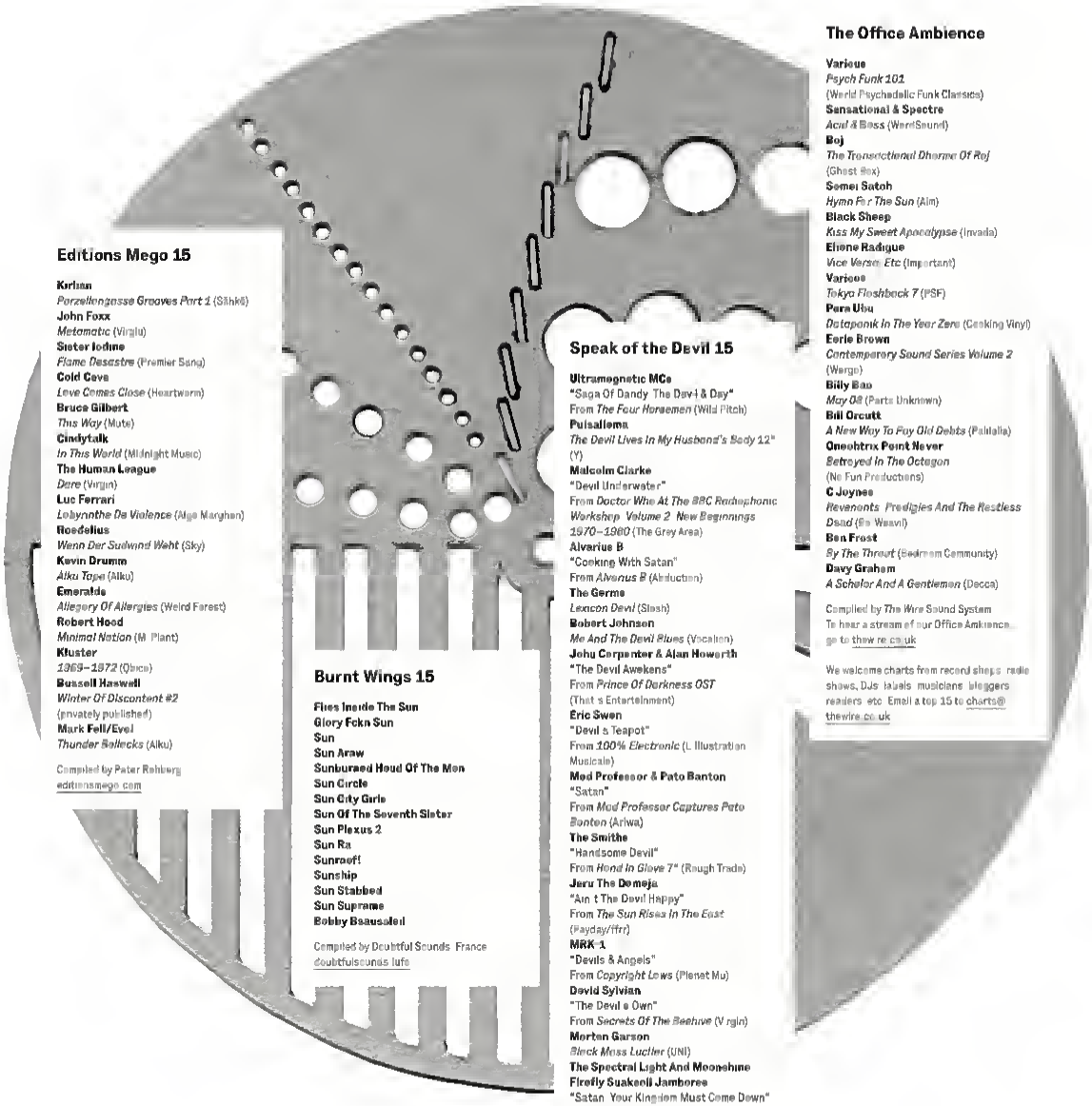
The Teutonic terrorist look he's adopted in the past few years might have put many people off, given the permission they sought to dismiss him as a holy fool. Up close and in conversation, you soon realise that's far from the truth, and that the folk imagery is tied into a larger scheme of Odinism. Perhaps much of the impetus comes from the fact that he's such a fan himself – of music, of the authors and thinkers he treats with as much reverence as a schoolgirl with Tippexed names on her rucksack.

And there's nothing magical in his philosophy: everything he does has to have some common sense and pragmatic value. It's got to be a useful tool for understanding where you're coming from and where you're at, a mental tin-opener for ripping open the canned reality of a mediated age. His 'career' has been just that, careering off on any number of research paths and musical adventures. A masterful manipulator of emblems, and neo-revolutionary heraldry, it would be easy to dismiss Cope as having lost the plot, tangled up in ley lines, superstition and conspiracy theories. In fact he's careful to distance himself from the least disciplined aspects of his chosen fields. For instance, he says, he doesn't believe in ley lines. "They're like heat haze on a summer road," he explains, "the closer you get to them, the further away you get." The Ordnance Survey maps, according to Cope, are oriented towards urban areas, while their accuracy decreases in the marginal rural zones. Which means that, "When you get to these places and you study what [ley line hunters] are saying, what looks straight on a map is completely skewiff, because 1: 50,000 is not even that accurate! I never want to be the guy who pours cold water on stuff, but in that case I had to be."

Cope has spent much of the summer in a strange place, mentally. Drugs have remained an important option for his journey – "It's part of my job," he had told me during an earlier phone conversation. In October 2007, on his 50th birthday, he took two acid tabs as a way to try to pole-vault over any approaching midlife crisis. Then, in the early summer this year, he ingested his first dose of salvia, one of the most potent of all hallucinogens. The immediate effects only lasted a few minutes, as is normal with the drug, but, as he put it, the doors it opened took a very long time to close again. Its effects were frightening and enlightening in equal measure, and it's clear he's still processing the information that he received while under its effects. He won't drive his car at the moment, for instance, because he says he saw a wasp on the windscreen, and tried to squash it with his finger, and inadvertently poked a hole right through the glass.

"The tragedy of my generation," he concludes, "is the tragedy of any generation. I'm 51, and yet whatever kind of good mental state I'm in is interfacing constantly with midlife crisis – not because I have one, but because every one of my contemporaries has one, and I'm aware of it – by their sheer underachievingness. So all I can do is keep on the programme, have as many old friends and as many young friends as possible, and hopefully I won't coagulate into some old git. With Black Sheep, it might all blow up in four months, it might keep going for 30 years. You never know. But it's part of the great experiment to see if it has anything more than a poetic truth about it. That's what it's about: that we can't all be born in the sight of the Great Pyramid of Cheops, but if you have a poet on board then he can say, There's a little Welsh mine where Grandfather had his arm cut off – that's a legendary place, because I deem it legendary. And that's the power of it, I think: to presume! You have to demand: this is important, because I say it's important." □ Black Sheep's *Kiss My Sweet Apocalypse* is out now on Invada. headheritage.co.uk

Black Sheep Acoustic Division (left to right) Acoustika, Cope, Michael O'Sullivan, Christophe F



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Sun Stabbed
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From *Copyright Laws* (Planet Mu)
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From *Secrets Of The Beehive* (Virgin)
Morten Garson
Black Mass Lucifer (UNI)
The Spectral Light And Moonshine Firefly Snakeoil Jamboree
"Satan Your Kingdom Must Come Down"
From *Scarecrow Stuffing/Burning Mills* (Acony Ball)

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Various
Psych Funk 101
(World Psychedelic Funk Classics)
Sensational & Spectre
Acid & Bass (WordSound)
Boj
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Betrayed In The Octagon
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C Joynes
Revenants Prodigies And The Restless Dead (Re Wavs)
Ben Frost
By The Throat (Bedroom Community)
Davy Graham
A Scholar And A Gentlemen (Decca)

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We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, DJs, labels, musicians, bloggers, readers, etc. Email a top 15 to charts@thewire.co.uk

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Karl Nawrot & Walter Warton

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Billy Bao in Soundcheck

Mar Sesa (Billy Bao)

Soundcheck A–Z

This month's selected CDs, vinyl and downloads

Derek Bailey & Steve Noble
Out Of The Past
Ping Pong CD

Is Derek Bailey destined to become the Tupac of European Improv? His discography continues to expand in the years since his death, and this is a particularly riotous assault from beyond the grave. Bailey spent 40-odd years insisting on being utterly himself; consequently his best albums were duos with equally strong-willed drummers. Steve Noble, most recently heard as part of the amp-frying NEW trio, was an ideal partner/opponent. This set was recorded – extremely well, it should be pointed out – a full decade ago, but such was the idiosyncratic state of Bailey's art that it could actually have happened any time between 1969 and the early 2000s.

He's in cranked-up electric mode throughout, as he was on contemporaneous recordings like *Daedal* with Susie Ibarra, or his work with The Ruins. Indeed, "The Long Wait", which opens the disc, and "Time Regained" and "7 Shades", its final two tracks, feature so much skronk and distortion they could easily be highlights of a compilation of Derek Bailey for Metalheads. In between, there are quieter passages: scrapes, buzzes, tiny pings. Throughout, Noble keeps pace, spinning out endless short rolls and cymbal washes that seem to be building to some sort of thunderous catharsis, but instead dissolve, subverted by a burst of noise from the older man.

When the music gets truly loud, Noble is ready, battering the kit in a way that jump-starts the listener's heart; when it's quieter, he sounds like he's building a birdhouse out of tin scraps as Bailey cuts wire to fasten it all together. This is a vigorous, combative album, documenting an encounter of such potency it's difficult to figure out why it was held back until now.
Phil Freeman

Billy Bao
May 08
Parts Unknown LP

At its most exaggerated, which is to say exhilerating, there was always an element of parody to punk rock. It was a hyper-vision of rock music, with everything necessarily inflated, debased, turned up to ten. Billy Bao, a phantom punk rock group that may or may not exist outside of the fevered brain of Basque avant provocateur Mattin, take five decades of insurrectionary music and push it so hard that they manage to rebirth the genre by the force of their critical vision.

Mattin is a musician who regularly takes a scalpel to the social, cultural and musical presuppositions of underground music. With Billy Bao he presents a group supposedly fronted by Bao himself, a politically radical expat Nigerian who's "so fucking depressed that he could die". The group play ludicrously overdriven two chord fuck-up rock 'n' roll while Billy explodes over the top like a politico Darby Crash, ranting about environmental pollution in Africa, Spanish bombs, food scarcity in the Third World and violent insurrection. The music uses snippets from a series of key subcultural flashpoints as fuel for the fire: Luigi Nono's *Non Consumiamo Marx*, made with recordings from the riots of Paris 1968; Fela Kuti's *Zombie*, which caused riots in Accra, Ghana, in 1978; Brainbombs' 1986 LP *Second Coming*, a major influence on the Billy Bao sound; and Whitehouse's 1998 track "Just Like A Cunt", which Mattin says "calls us all stereotypes. And we're trying to do something about that."

Indeed, the arc of the album works to reconnect Noise and experimental music with African-American traditions, starting off with primitive two chord blues married to the feral saxophone style of John Coltrane as retranslated by The Stooges, until by the second half of the LP, where Billy starts to echo the Whitehouse track with lyrics like *"you fucking cunt ... you fucking stereotype"*, it feels as if they have accelerated rock 'n' roll to the point of noise noise noise.

The cover art presents the full text of the tracks, in anarchist red and black, and it reads like an over the top parody as much as a call to arms, just as the sonics combine a withering critique of Noise rock with a bolstering of its most outrageous modes. Punk rock has always relied on parodying what came before in order to internalise and move beyond it. Like The Germs on *Lexicon Devil*, a group that Billy Bao have much in common with, *May 08* bolsters the tradition by demolishing it completely, by pushing revolt to the point of camp so that it becomes even more revolting. That Billy Bao manage to do this with a virtual, computer-edited version of rock 'n' roll, a precisely cut-up, digital, sharp take on crude destructo rock, suggests that the future of rock, the future of culture, lies in its continual explosion. Vive la revolution? Ha ha ha.
David Keenan

Burkhard Beins
Structural Drift
Edition Kunstlerhauser Worpswede CD

Burkhard Beins is best known as one of the most distinctive percussionists in European free music, performing in groups both in Berlin (Phosphor, Perlonex, Activity Center) and beyond (The Sealed Knot, Trio Sowari), though on the strength of his two solo albums, 2007's *Disco Prova* and now *Structural Drift*, he's no slouch as a composer either, bringing the same acute ear for timbre and immaculate sense of timing to more fixed structures. But whereas *Disco Prova*, with its rattling machinery and Joy Division samples, was an affectionate nod to the Industrial and new wave music Beins grew up listening to, this new release's shifting tectonic plates of synthesizer, E-bowed zither and self-designed electronic instruments (including ET, a handheld oscillator with built-in speakers) belong in a parallel universe of electronic music along with the psychoacoustic wonders of Eliane Radigue and Maryanne Amacher.

Beins's compositions retain the same fondness for occasional sudden shifts of texture and dynamic that characterises his improvising. Combining purely electronic sounds sourced from a Korg MS20 with his customary organic performing materials, wood and stone, the three pieces on the album were conceived and elaborated during a residency earlier this year in the Lower Saxony village of Worpswede, and the landscape surrounding the village, as shown on the album cover, with its lonely roads, bare trees and leaden skies, seems appropriate. What on first contact might appear cold and featureless reveals on close listening a remarkable wealth of warmth, colour and detail.
Dan Warburton

Borah Bergman & Stefano Pastor
Live At Tortona
Mutable CD

Stefano Pastor plays his violin like a wind instrument, he explains, using rigid guitar strings because he couldn't find violin strings heavy enough. When Alberto Bazzurro, organiser of the Tortona Festival, heard that the young Genoese violinist was collaborating with free jazz pianist Borah Bergman, he invited them to his 2007 event. This recording is the result – 44 minutes edited down from 90, the first three tracks Bergman compositions, the last two spontaneous improvisations.

I called Bergman a free jazz pianist, and it was a highly complex, contrapuntal, totally ambidextrous style he first achieved recognition for, well into middle age, with recordings for Soul Note from 1983. But in more recent albums such as *Meditations For Piano* and *Luminescence*, Bergman has essentialised it, producing an intensely elegiac minimalism. That, largely, is what we hear on this compelling release.

"Spirit Song" is a moving piece of melancholia where, except for occasional outbursts, the florid style is kept in check – Stefano Pastor has a largely accompanying role here, but his hard, thick tone takes some adjusting to. If "Spirit Song" is melancholy, the slow piano solo "When Autumn Comes", with no pyrotechnics at all, is achingly affecting. The piece ends as the local church bells join in, uncannily in time, seeming to echo the lament. In the two improvisations, which develop themes from the compositions, the results are more collaborative – though as with piano virtuosos from Art Tatum to Cecil Taylor, there's a nagging question of how much they really respond to their fellow players.

Bergman is in a glorious Indian summer of his career, still the difficult, demanding artist – we must thank those prepared to venture into his soundworld, when the results are as beautiful as this.
Andy Hamilton

Big Sexy Noise
Big Sexy Noise
Sartorial CD

Over the last two decades Lydia Lunch has concentrated on the spoken word, but *Big Sexy Noise* sees her fronting a full-on sneer-fest of a dozen rock songs in the company of three members of Gallon Drunk. Most of the tracks are originals, opening with "Gospel Singer", which Lunch co-wrote with Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon for their shortlived Harry Crews trio. The dark and disillusioned bump 'n' grind is a swaggering, stripped back and ultimately live take on rock. Comparisons with The Kills are apposite, though Big Sexy Noise would not stoop to such chicanery as drum machines or electronics. This is impatient, no-nonsense music, as Lunch moans on "Doughboy": *"I tried to warn you it would come to this/All of your friends are so sick of your shit."* Terry Edwards's organ playing is perfunctory, and his sax sounds like he pressed the frothing freakout preset. Drummer Ian White is bloody loud, and James Johnston furiously slams down riffs and gets the hell out.

Lunch is keen to stress the utter weirdness of everyone involved, so shouldn't the music be a little less efficient, a tad chaotic? Still, she does bitter street-vamp pretty well, telling tales of putting *"a rifle to the head of some fucked-up kid"* in a voice that had seen it all when you were in short pants. "Your Love Don't Pay My Rent" tips over into potty-mouthed pantomime, but is still fun. The cover versions are "Kill Your Sons", written by Lou Reed about his teenage electro-shock treatment, and "That Smell", the ominous Lynyrd Skynyrd song released in 1977 shortly before Skynyrd's plane crashed and wiped out half the group.
Clive Bell

Blanketship
The Sound Of Fun Surrounds You/ Klangwunder
Gigante Sound CD

The kind of plunderphonic samplism epitomised by Vicki Bennett's People Like Us (for whose *Do Or DIY* radio show this set of tracks was originally put together), and similar one-off absurdist collagists like Cassetteboy and early Osymyso, makes a strength of simplicity. By using rough sampling and processing techniques the cut-up itself becomes the artform, humour, strangeness and charm emerging from the mundane through the cracks.

But San Franciscan Jared Blum, aka Blanketship, is altogether slicker. His thickly layered and distinctly musical pieces, though completely sample based, all feature high-bitrate sound quality and smooth timestretching algorithms, so much so that it no longer feels like a cut-up at all but more like an uncannily real CGI chimera. While this makes for a fascinating experience of spotting the joins and picking out details, it can occasionally too closely resemble the deadeningly 'sophisticated' 1990s

Brian Harnetty

Will Oldham aka Bonnie 'Prince' Billy

Jess McKinley (Oldham)

Kentucky voices old and new haunt the multilayered compositions of **Brian Harnetty**
By Clive Bell

Brian Harnetty & Bonnie 'Prince' Billy
Silent City
Atavistic CD

Two years ago Brian Harnetty, an ex-student of composer Michael Finnissy, released *American Winter*, an emotional encounter between his own music and a trawl through the Appalachian Sound Archives of Berea College in Kentucky. Some of its earliest moments occur off-camera, as it were. During the opening piece "The Night Is Quite Advancing", an elderly woman is digging deep in her memory for words to a song she hasn't sung since she was a girl. Suddenly a gulf opens up and we hear her shock: "I've lost track! That did something to me – scared me to death." The final track, "We'll Look For You If We Come Back", captures an awkward moment between the archiving recordists and a toothless gent: is he asking for money, or maybe just trying to persuade them to keep him company a little longer? The process of collecting old songs is exposed as a strange, unpredictable human interaction, where subjects may tumble backwards into disturbing memories.

While working on *American Winter*, Harnetty says, he "kept hearing elements of Will Oldham's voice in the old recordings", and started corresponding with the singer. He hoped to persuade Oldham (aka Bonnie 'Prince' Billy) to sing on that record, but schedules did not permit the collaboration until now. *Silent City* is another powerful personal statement in which the distant past and present are interwoven. Harnetty juxtaposes archive recordings with his own piano, banjo and accordion, and this odd co-existence generates a new poetic context for the bygone voices. Working like a novelist, he has immersed himself in an archive of field recordings – slices of past lives – and now emerges to create a new text, breathing new life into old chunks of sound by radically recontextualising them.

Silent City is a more accessible album than its predecessor. Harnetty has reduced the surface complexity of his music, and raised the temperature by adding the warm tones of an electric piano. The core is still Harnetty's own piano, accordion and harmonium, but he has assembled a small group to flesh things out: drums, trumpet, vibes and clarinet. Lyrics were pieced together from folk song fragments (pulled from Berea recordings) and phrases drawn from Harnetty's memories of his father's rural hometown.

The underlying concept is an amble around a small rural town. We seem to peer in at windows, each one from a different period of the past. Some of the archive elements recall the debut album – a track dissolves into the scrape of a foot-stamping folk fiddler, or a radio announcer from half a century ago stumbles while introducing the next live act. Harnetty's piano doesn't drive the music in a conventional manner; more as if it were a set of tuned bells, hanging notes around the room like decorations. "Well, There Are A Lot Of Stories" finds Harnetty's father reminiscing about prison life, surrounded by suspended chords on clarinet and accordion, and propelled forwards by Sam Paxton's drums. Alarmingly, Harnetty Senior used to play with the local prisoners as a schoolboy: "They were killers, and I was never afraid all the time I was there; hell, I could run faster than any of them." Elsewhere, "Papa Made That Last Verse Up" dives headlong into a long-ago parlour full of cackling laughter and family versions of a comic song.

Amidst all of this, Oldham contributes three substantial vocal performances. Harnetty likes vocal and backing simply to share the same space, rather than neatly interlock, and Oldham's voice is deployed here somewhat as the cobwebby archive tapes were on *American Winter*, creating a further slippage between the present and past. Oldham's singing is fragile but firm, adding both mystery and focus to the album. "And Under The Wineap Tree" floats his vocal across Harnetty's accompaniment as if the singer is dimly recalling the song from his youth. "Sleeping In The Driveway" is a love song from a timid admirer, watching a girl asleep in her car, hearing the radio quietly playing, not daring to approach. The high point is "Some Glad Day", where Oldham dips a tad lower in his vocal range and comes up with a lovely evocation: "*Brick-making prison, tobacco in the grass, some glad day we'll all arrive*." The song, for all its otherworldly drift, works like a hymn, in which only the first line changes for each verse. This is the experimental end of Bonny 'Prince' Billy's oeuvre: gentle and solemn. It recalls his *Get On Jolly* (2000) collaboration with Dirty Three member Mick Turner, where the lyrics were picked from devotional verses by Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941).

Harnetty's teacher Finnissy has long been developing his own take on folk music. In the late 1970s he wrote and performed a raucous, unsentimental piano suite called *English Country Tunes*. For this, two fingers aloft project the accent was firmly on the first syllable of the second word. For him the piece was "most simply a totentanz – a dance of death, a lament, a wake – celebrating arcadia, the product of a long fantasy tradition of 'rural innocence'". The remainder is made up of a series of responses to, meditations and variations upon, the 'issue' of folk-music, and how one integrates it now (with meaning and vitality) into 'art-music'." Well, putting quotes around all your terms is a start.

Finnissy's bracing counterblast against English pastoralism was a way of wresting folk song back from the clammy hands of Vaughan Williams. Meanwhile Brian Harnetty creates a space to work with a wealth of American folk, parlour music, radio shows and roaming archivists. *Silent City* weaves a melancholy spell of chiming pianos and vibraphones, much aided by Paxton's low-key but eloquent drumming. By the closing "To Hear Still More" – backwards piano over purring harmonium bass – we are in deep, under the music's hypnosis ☐

lounge-hop of Thievery Corporation, Ursule 1000 and co.

Thankfully, Blim has also used the mutability possible with modern sampling to steer clear of the four-square beat tyranny of that period, and there is enough unexpected slippage and strangeness – particularly in the free jazz-led "Jai's Friend Drum Suite" and drunken rein-soaked "Stop Your Complaining" to keep things interesting. These pieces are just confections ultimately, but most of them are exquisitely constructed confections for all that.

Joe Muggs

Broadcast & The Focus Group
Broodcast & The Focus Group Investigate Witch Cults Of The Radio Age
Warp CD/LP/Download

Much has been made of the Englishness of both Broadcast and the Ghost Box stable of artists, of which The Focus Group is one. Certainly the work of both, here as ever, is laced with this country's history, fiction and pop-cultural memory, in a strange brew where delicate folksy kitsch and pagan terror, bureaucratic mundanity and baroque psychedelia are revealed as inseparable parts of the English subconscious. But there is something else going on, a trans-national subcurrent.

By allowing The Focus Group to roughly splice and dice their source material, letting beats and loops slip out of time with one another and using rough and ready analogue effects, Broadcast have ended up with a sound that closely resembles the post-Madlib side of Wonky hiphop, particularly recent sampladelic tracks and mixes by Gaslamp Killer. But where Gaslamp Killer applies the techniques of hiphop to obscure internationalist psychedelia, here the artists find those hiphop techniques *within* psychedelia.

Both have happened upon an untethering of slippage and slurring of loops and rhythms, a new approach to sampling that perhaps better represents the way music really sits in our memory: fragmentary, non-regimented and prone to the whims of chance and chaos. The hyperactivity of these 23 broken up fragments makes it perhaps a less satisfying listen than a Broadcast album 'proper', but as an upwelling of a very current kind of psychedelic memory-manipulation, it really is quite fabulous.

Joe Muggs

Jamie Coleman/Grundlik Kasyansky/Seymour Wright
Control And Its Opposites
Another Timbre Byways CD-R

Mathieu Forge/Phil Julian/David Papapostolou
Meshes
Another Timbre Byways CD-R

Paul Abbott/Leo Dumont/Ute Kanngiesser
Loiter Volcano
Another Timbre Byways CD-R

Léo Dumont & Matt Milton
Scrub
Another Timbre Byways CD-R

Another Timbre is one of those labels with a name – like Blue Note, Impulse! or AUM Fidelity – that resonates with the sound of the music it releases. Founded in 2007 by Simon Reynell, a television sound recordist disillusioned at the state of broadcast media (especially in his own field of documentary making), the label has developed a robust core identity with a catalogue of 19 discs with as many distinct perspectives on quiet, lowercase improv.

Except, of course, the full picture is more complicated. Reynell has also issued composed music by John Cage and Frank Denyer, while *Improvisations For Shakuhachi And Ney* finds Clive Bell and Bechir Saade building around another cultural construct altogether. But Reynell's nuanced, detailed approach to recording has shed the effect of prompting improvisors into exploring uncharted margins of atomised sound, secure in the knowledge that their explorations will be faithfully reproduced. This sequence of four releases, all recorded in London during March and April this year, comes under the Another Timbre Byways tag – a satellite series of CD-R recordings designed as a sort of inexpensive audio blog documenting a specific moment in time.

Control And Its Opposites, featuring Jamie Coleman (trumpet), Grundlik Kasyansky (electronics) and Seymour Wright (alto saxophone) is a typical Another Timbre project. Recorded at the Church of St James the Great in Friern Barnet, North London, the disc opens with the exterior ambience of faint traffic rumble and leaves blowing on trees framing a context for the music to come. Coleman's marvellously chameleon like trumpet zones into the bountiful harmony of this external background, his snpple-breathy overtones weaving aronnd textures and timbres spotlighted by the immaculate recording. Kasyansky's electronic rig occasionally blurts out ear-splitting shockers, but otherwise probes the emerging continuum. In the letter stages of this 80 minute improvisation Wright sporadically punctures the flow with seemingly incongruous Fire Music-like shrieks. But listen closer and you realise that he has managed to harness the impetus behind the sonnd, while ditch ng the stylistic reference itself. Yes, another timbre.

The church acoustic figures once again in *Meshes*, featuring French trombonist Mathieu Forge with Phil Julien (electronics) and David Papepostolou (cello), also recorded in Friern Barnet, with a second 'live' track cut a few days previously. Forge's burping trombone, Papapostolon's percussive cello and Julian's electronics stutter onwards in a procession of knocks and rattles that ricochet against the resonant acoustic. While, in another context, those same gestures might imply velocity and speed, these acoustic realities divert the music towards a more meandering, leisurely paced structure that is intriguingly at odds with its material.

On *Loiter Volcano*, Ute Kanngiesser approaches the cello with a wholly other mindset to Papapostolou's. A str king sequence of high-register pizzicato notes is heard against the twanging cartoon violence of Leo Dumont's percussion and Paul Abbott's electronics. As the Heath Robinson mechanism unwinds, her drones and arpeggiations move with the grain of her instrnment. But she hijacks that grain, twisting cello mannerisms into distorted shapes as she processes the electronic and percussion onslaught. *Scrub*, violinist Matt Milton's duo with Leo Dumont, isn't bad, but feels more like generic free Improv than the other three. But it does underscore how exacting a language Reynell's concepts of recording improvised music have provoked, and in such a short time.

Philip Clark

Alan Courtis/Bruce Russell/Eddie Prévost/Mattin
The Sokoda Sessions
Azul Discografica LP

"There are people who make far more beautiful music than I do," admits Basque laptopper Mattin in a recent interview. "I want something that fucks with my mind, that really questions to the core, what judgement itself is: a social thing, an ideological thing. Not something that reaffirms my own 'very good taste'." Even so, when it comes to choosing partners, his taste has been consistently excellent: a list of Mattin collaborators reads like a Who's Who of latterday Improv and Noise, featuring artists as extreme and diverse in orientation as Junko and Radu Malfatti.

Sakada is a long running project with AMM percussionist Eddie Prévost, in whose Friday night workshops Mattin cut his teeth a decade ago. Only one of their releases so far has been a duo, though – instead, chameleon-like, the Sakada sound morphs to suit the input of the invited guests: raw and terse with Rosy Parlane (on the self-titled 2002 debut on wmo/r), restrained and tense with Rhodri Davies, Mark Wastell and Margarida Garcia (*Never Give Up On The Morgins Of Logic*, Antiopic 2004).

So it is on *The Sokado Sessions*, two side-long tracks recorded respectively in 2006 and 2004. On the more recent of these they're joined by ex-Reynolds frontman Alan Courtis, whose th ck poncho of guitar sludge wraps Prevost's bowed cymbals and Mattin's squeals and sampled snare drum thnds in a dark psychedelic smog that barely clears in the final seconds with a groan of distant traffic from the world beyond. On the B side, the third man is *The Wire* contributor Bruce Russell, another Mattin hero whose brutal guitar playing in The Dead C he cites as a major influence. In apparent contrast to their well ergned and erudite w rtten commentanes elsewhere on the aesthetics of New Music, the music these three men make lurches forward with ugly abandon, relentlessly thwarting expectations: proof that the best way for music to fuck with the mind is to start by fucking the ears.

Dan Warburton

Arrington de Dionyso
Malaikat Dan Singa
K CD

The Naked Future
Gigantomochia
ESP Disk CD

Arrington de Dionyso is a busy guy. First achieving underground renown as a member of free-trance punk-jazzers Old Time Relijun, he's put out a dumpster-full of solo and collaborative releases, switching back and forth between saxophone, bass clarinet, throat singing or something like it, and whatever else strikes his fancy at/in the moment. It flirts with farce every second, but somehow always pulls back from the brink of outright laughability.

On *Malaikat Dan Singa*, de Dionyso sings in Indonesian and plays long, squawky saxophone solos, there are also some tape effects and drone pieces. Maybe if you speak Indonesian, it's brilliant, but if you don't it sounds like the vocalist from Finnish motorik rockers Circle in the middle of a particularly overripe tirade, with e bassist and drummer behind him cranking out one chord pummelling vamps.

He also makes an appearence on *Gigantomochia*, the debut release from The Naked Future. This disc operates in a more conventionally free jazz mode, with keening and bluster from the bass clarinet, percussive piano, bass that churns and screpes, and primitivist drumming. Track titles like "We Binge On A Bloodthirsty God", "We Boil The Raven's Skull Into Gold" and "We Fly Beneath And Above The Flux" suggest e collective desire to be seen as ecstatic pagans, but the abandon feels staged. Oe Dionyso's attempts to combine Walt Whitman's barbaric yawp with various cultural modes (Tuvan, Indonesian) and post-Arthur Doyle squawk and slobber reed technique, while admirable in the abstract, ultimately never quite result in the writing/creation of anything truly substantial. It's obvious that he regards himself and his art with utter seriousness, it's not at all clear yet why anyone else should do the same.

Phil Freeman

The Deadnotes
Orenge Trumpet
Soft Abuse LP

Something like Brisbane's answer to Meher Shalal Hash Baz but without the vocals, The Deadnotes are a low key, low skill and lo-fi trio devoted to the art of the brief, inconsequential musical snippet. With trumpet, Casio keyboard and drums they amble amiably through 30 short tracks falling out of time, forgetting the melody and rigorously refusing to develop any ideas beyond their initial statement. This has a certain charm. "The Days And The Nights" and the title track are both jaunty pop intros, reminiscent of Pram, that simply won't go anywhere. "Through The Hoop" is spiky, concise and ends on a wrong note. "Chasing The Tail" is a funk riff minus the funk, with an austere trumpet solo that collapses in laughter. What were these crazy white boys thinking of?

So far so hatstand, but too many tracks default to a mid-tempo slacker's march to nowhere and you start to lose patience. The absence of a singer is a problem. Maher, Tenniscoats and The 49 Americans may have dealt in wrong notes along the way, but a singer's personality knits the enterprise together. On the rare occasions when The Deadnotes vocalise, even if it's only moaning into a toy FX unit ("Broken Wheel"), their

The cinematic electronica of Australian **Ben Frost** offers a Hi-Def portal To other worlds By **Joe Muggs**

Ben Frost
By The Throat
Bedroom Community CD/LP/Download

A sense of the cinematic in music, certainly if you look back ten to 15 years, has tended to mean nostalgia. Whether sampling Lalo Schifrin, Bernard Herrmann or blaxploitation tracks as a shortcut to sophistication and funkiness, using all-purpose Lynchian tropes of unease and subversion, or simply deploying the bland romantic sweep of sub-John Williams soundtracks to evoke non-specific whimsical feelings, it has been about movies as a cultural memory store, even when artists intended to deconstruct these sources.

Only the Jungle/drum n' bass of the Metalheadz axis, updating a tradition running through Kraftwerk and Model 500 and harnessing the immersion of sound system culture, seemed capable of making widescreen sonic pictures not beholden to the past. A track like Dillinja's "Angels Fell" sampled Vangelis not out of nostalgia for *Blade Runner* imagery but because it evoked the technological present, and Photek's "UFO" and "Rings Of Saturn" were genuinely unearthly in their structures' evocations and creations of new worlds.

As with almost everything in daily Western life, though, cinema has been changed by the infiltration of technology. The omnipresence of CGI, Hi-Definition, IMAX and home cinema – complete with surround sound and subwoofers – have all made film more aggressively hyperreal. In turn, the collision of visual and sonic technology has been feeding into many strands of underground music, certainly much recent Ambient, avant Metal, Noise and dubstep, aims at this kind of enveloping, bodily absorption of sound and sense of scale, the latter often physically embodied in totemic speaker stacks. And it's at the convergence of these strands that Ben Frost works. An Australian now living in Iceland, Frost originally operated in the area between Ambient, modern composition and post-shoegaze guitar drones associated with the likes of Fennesz and the Type label; his 2007 album *Theory Of Machines* ramped up both the Metal snarl and the electronic Noise processing. But his latest release *By The Throat* slips free of such slow-burn structures to create something defiantly new and distinctly dramatic and programmatic.

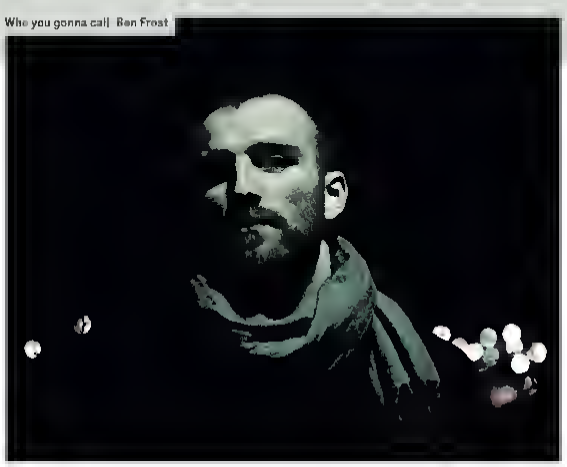
The direct cinematic reference here is a peculiar one. The centrepiece of the album is "Peter Venkman Pt I & II" – Peter Venkman being the central character of the *Ghostbusters* movies, an archetypal trickster figure played by Bill Murray as a wisecracking New Yorker, brought by his own venal lusts into communion with an ancient Babylonian god of destruction. This could suggest a connection with Hypnagogic pop's rewiring of 1980s popcultural imagery – and certainly there is a hint of kitsch in the sampled choral voices that spin through the mix of this two part track. But Frost's is not a fuzzy dreamscape – it's a sharp-edged, Hi-Def encounter with the dangerously sublime. Rather than dredging up memories of 80s movies, he is instead rebooting and recreating the Gnosis that lies at the heart of so many of them. Not only *Ghostbusters*, but films such as *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, *Transformers The Movie*, *Star Trek The Motion Picture* all have a key moment of reality rupturing, and contact being made with beings inhuman in scale and intent. This idea of quasi-sexual mystical communion with something incomprehensibly large, fearsome and – in the original sense of the word – awesome comes across in the harshly beautiful "Peter Venkman Pt I" and the imperial horns of "Pt II".

A feeling of proximity to overwhelming scale and power runs throughout the album. In the coda to "Hibakusa", droning strings create a sluggish river of lava, sudden spurts of noise erupting toward the listener as if the molten rock is spitting. The rumble of double basses is a key sound in the album, frequently pitched right down and amped right up, so – particularly in "The Carpathians" and the main body of "Hibakusa" – the drag of the bow across strings becomes the rumbling purr of a giant beast, again with a sense of danger as sudden barks and swipes of sound whip out of the soundfield. In "Killshot" and "Through The Glass Of The Roof", vast distorted chords rise rapidly in volume then fall away in an instant to a dubstep-inspired sub-bass drop, the vertigo of the sensation only emphasised in "Killshot" by the more human scale of a dulcimer melody. Even the album's most classically cinematic track, "Leo Needs A New Pair Of Shoes", with its rippling minimalist piano and string motifs, is periodically interrupted by something alien, something threateningly 'other' in a swarming hiss that penetrates the entire mix.

Such musical hybridity runs the risk of sinking to the lowest common denominator – Frost's music could simply become a formulaic spin on Noisa, or a showreel for soundtrack commissions from Hollywood producers. There are moments when the drama feels like high camp and the conjoining of danger threatens to become pornographic. In the style of a Hollywood action movie, rather than genuinely sublime.

But there is more to this music than that, and it can evoke better than any film adaptation the scale of Stanislaw Lem's unapproachable *Solaris* or Samiconductor Films' awe-inspiring *Brilliant Noise* film of the boiling, spitting surface of the sun. The deliberate and starkly realised creation of other worlds succeeds like very little since Photek. Frost utilises the musical and technological developments of the past decade, and the atavistic power of its Metal elements to make those worlds all-encompassing and eerily real. Occasionally the experience may feel like a home cinema thrill ride, but at its best this record truly does grab you by the throat. □

Who you gonna call: Ben Frost



music makes more sense.

Members Leighton Craig, Stnart Busby and Engene Carchesio are prolific Brisbane musicians – Carchesio was also the man behind the cultish one-man band DNE, and is also a respected visual artist. But everything else I've heard by them – Craig's *11 Easy Pieces* on Room40, Craig and Carchesio's *Leaves* on Naturestrip – has had more substance than this sketchy trio effort.

Clive Bell

Fire!

You Liked Me Five Minutes Ago

Rune Grammofon CD

It's not clear whether the group name is a warning or an order to shoot. Either way the group urgencies are less obvious than with Mats Gustafsson's other trio The Thing, with Ingebrigt Håker Flaten and Paal Nilssen-Love. His partners here are the less confrontational Johan Berthling, who doubles on electric guitar and Hammond as well as basses, and drummer Andreas Werlinn. All the titles are inspired by Robert Crealey – is he the only Black Mountain post improvisors have heard of? – and there's a solitary, atmospheric vocal by Mariam Wallentin on "But Sometimes I Am".

The opening track "If I Took Your Hand" establishes a group language that is strikingly reminiscent of The Trio, where John Snrman squalled on baritone over heavy vamps and ostinati from Barre Phillips and Stu Martin. On "But Sometimes I Am" the material is even more stripped down, with most of the action coming from a slowly seesawing bass figure, perhaps more reminiscent of The Necks this time, that seems to lose momentum as saxophone, then voice, declare themselves. Berthling's guitar occupies much of the foreground on the long "Can I Hold You For A Minute?", which trades in freebop in favour of rockist atmospherics.

Gustafsson phones in his parts, but he's often more engaging in this role than in his more concentrated offerings. He dabbles in electronics and a spot of Fender Rhodes. His stop-time line on the title track – actually not so much a line as a steady modulation of key and timbre – has an anthemic Chicagoan cast, the sort of thing you might hear rounding out a set at the Empty Bottle. He doesn't stretch himself much, which makes the group name all the harder to read, but it's engaging enough, an appealing time-waster.

Brian Morton

Chris Forsyth

Dreams

Evolving Ear LP

Philadelphia based guitarist Chris Forsyth is best known as a member of Peeesseye, an American trio with links to the Scottish Noise underground (vocalist/percussionist Fritz Welch is currently based in Glasgow) and the free music scene in Brooklyn (home of keyboardist/electronicist Jaime Fennelly). On the face of it, this vinyl release, the follow-up to Forsyth's debut CD of last year, *Live Journal At The Mice Machine VIP Dance Floor*, is a solo guitar record. But that description would be as inadequate as labelling Peeesseye – a unit that mixes Noise, folk, drone, improv and sound poetry – a rock group. Indeed, those post-everything, magpie tendencies are evident here too, with Forsyth drawing on a number of strategies not commonly associated with guitar music.

Opening track "Soft History" begins with strident acoustic fingerpicking, setting up cyclical patterns that constantly reconfigure themselves with shifting emphasis – taking on the hypnotic quality of a Steve Reich composition, while "String Haters" touches on the aesthetic of another American minimalist, starting with a rapid agitation of strings and a single-note insistence reminiscent of Rhys Chatham's "Guitar Trio". Just as Chatham was harnessing the aggression and energy of punk for his own ends, so Forsyth drews the transporting qualities of psychedelic Noise into his work, adding multitracked layers of overdriven electric guitar and whammy-bar manipulations that build to a dense, impenetrable white-out.

After the brief and comparatively disposable low key mope of "Long Warm Afternoon", the album ends on its longest track, "Dream Number One". Starting with some inscrutable spoken aphorisms from Fritz Welch, it quickly settles into a pristine rising drone. Laced with small, precise electric guitar gestures, it achieves a delicate stasis – like a held breath – and finally ascends into a heavenly state not far from the neo-Kosmische guitar and synth realms of Emeralds' recent work. It's enough to signal Forsyth's arrival as an erudite and fersighted guitar stylist, mapping a path that's hip and scholerly in equal measure.

Daniel Spicer

Githead

Landing

Swim CD

The name sounds so carelessly chosen, and the group itself originally came together to play a one-off gig at Swim Records' tenth anniversary party – facts which might suggest something a bit loose and off the cuff. But the circumstantial evidence doesn't fit with what Githead's music actually sounds like. Three albums in, and the quartet have sculpted a very precise sound, a streamlined wash of throbbing, linear basslines, textural guitar riffs and crisp drumming. It's neat but very loud, propulsive but controlled, almost too much so. Given the pedigree of Githead's members' their combined efforts amount to an extended understatement. There's Colin Newman and Robin Rimbaud sharing guitar duties, with the drums played by Max Franken, and Newman's wife Malka Spigel on bass and vocals. They don't sound like a bunch of moonlighters on hiatus from their various day jobs – *Landing* is a formidable demonstration of a group mind at work – but there really is nothing that's aurally subversive here.

Except that the group's stripped down guitar rock bas cs themselves undermine expectations. Add to this Spigel's almost dreamlike air of vocal detachment and you've got something that carries a weird kind of charge: motorik monotony applied to concise guitar music delivered with a mixture of disarming simplicity and hand-tooled precision. It's both perplexing and satisfying, like fast food served with a near obsessive sense of perfectionism.

Tom Ridge

Government Alphe

Resolution Of Remembrance 1992–1999

Pica Disk 4×CD

This latest box of Noise from Lasse Marhaug's Pica Disk label celebrates the work of third generation Japanese Noise musician Yasutoshi Yoshida's Government Alpha. On four CDs through 62 tracks *Resolution Of Remembrance* traces Yoshida's progress from early trial and error studies through to more established work where his Noise becomes less musical. Originally scattered in small quantities on cassettes, lathe-cut records and CD-Rs this box set will be a revelation to all but the most devout Noise music enthusiast. For those expecting yet another batch of power electronics inner ear scourging, however, Government Alpha manage – on the first disc at least – to come up with a slightly different approach.

"Quickening" on disc one reveals his strong, pure feeling for making sound. Inspired by the surrealistic comedy of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, the sound collages of Nurse W'th Wound (which he felt were the aural equivalent of Python) and, more obscurely, the opening track on German Speed Metal group Accept's *Restless And Wild* LP, where a scretched sample from a German pastorel record is sampled into the introduction of their song "Fast As A Shark". These early influences resulted in a work where distorted sampled sounds were edited into the tapes he made, mostly for his own amusement, to establish a primitive form of Noise concrete. Here the repeated yipping of a small dog and what sounds like ball bearings being stir-fried produce outsider rhythms that no synthesizer or combination of FX pedals could ever faithfully reproduce as well as giving Yoshida's Noise brand its own distinct thumbprint.

The raw psychedelic synthesized Noise that pulses through the rest of the set stands apart from this first flush of Art Brutish sincerity. The swirling sonic chaos of Yoshida's later work is more sophisticated, but somehow not so unique.

Edwin Pouncey

Russell Haswell

Wild Tracks

Editions Mego CD

Packaged in an elaborate plastic Kidzbox DVD case, *Wild Tracks* almost looks like some kind of children's game from the 1980s that you would find hanging on the racks in a cool toy store. And it sounds like it was a lot of fun to make, consisting of extreme environmental recordings made by Russell Haswell in a variety of unlikely situations sticking microphones into anthills, recording falling snow, capturing the sounds of "Local Gamekeepers Shooting A Few Fields Away". It combines the disobedient thrill of being where you shouldn't with an endearing, almost childlike inquisitiveness.

Haswell makes a point of insisting that

these recordings are not actually field recordings but rather soundtracks with the visual component removed previously used as part of various multimedia and film projects He calls them "deliberate recordings", but seeing as most field recordings are just as deliberately conceived it feels a bit like splitting heirs, albeit with a tiny microphone attached

Throughout *Wild Tracks* Haswell seems to work as a lightning rod for displays of military hardware with the sound of attack helicopters and air defence fighters interrupting a few of the recordings and giving the CD an atmosphere of covert infiltration and Cold War paranoia The extensive sleevenotes illuminate some of the more minimal tracks, as when he suggests headphones for "Wasp War" so that you can experience the feeling of wasps flying straight into your skull and compares the later arrival on the scene of two attack helicopters as sonically comparable to the surround sound mix of the Antarctic husky/alien hunt-down scene from John Carpenter's *The Thing*. But despite Haswell's protests and his admirable determination to avoid "rainforest and nocturnal amphibian type material", *Wild Tracks* fails to transcend its straightforward documentation of environmental sound, making for a series of field recordings that are interesting in terms of their ideas and execution but with little in terms of extended sonic appeal.

David Keenan

Richard Hell

Destiny Street Repaired

Insound CD

Classical composers often revised their work over the years, but rock records are so of the moment, so linked to the time of their creation that the idea of reworking them seems pointless or even heretical But that's precisely why Richard Hell 27 years later, has 'repaired' the second Voidoids album *Destiny Street* He says that in 1982, when the album was recorded "I was so debilitated by despair and drug need that I was useless" Instead of the songs being presented with clarity, the record ended up being a "high-pitched sludge of guitar noise"

Maybe hearing the original triggers a Pavlovian response for Hell, because objectively it's nowhere near as bad as that description would suggest Although the rhythm section of Hell on bass, Fred Maher on drums, and Naux and Robert Quine on rhythm guitar are preserved, all guitar solos here were rerecorded by original Voidoids guitarist Ivan Julian, Bill Frisell and Marc Ribot They sound a little tacked on, but, far from smoothing out the sound, they are both as elliptical and more incisive than Quine and Julien's originals, and have the sort of energy and edge that Hell says he originally envisaged

Although the music sounds like it could have been recorded any time over the last 30 years, the repaired version has more punch and clarity But, on "The Kid With The Replaceable Head", Hell's vocals – rerecorded on every track – do have a slightly tremulous Homer Simpson quality to them Hell has been a full-time writer for more than two decades now, but as a lyricist this was the sort of erudite but pared-down punk rock at which he excelled And while a cover of Them's "I Can Only Give You Everything" fits well alongside Hell's own songs, his reading of Dylan's "Gone, Gone, Gone" seems anomalous It's the typically sardonic wit of a Hell original like "Lowest Common Dominator" that really stands out in this intriguing if short and inconsistent set.

Mike Barnes

Leyland Kirby

History Always Favours The Winners

History Always Favours The Winners 3×CD/6×LP/Download

History Always Favours The Winners finds V/Vm founder James Kirby, the figure behind The Caretaker and The Stranger, striking out on his own in more than one sense Not only is this epic triple CD set being released under a close approximation of his own name – Leyland being the name of his grandfather – it was reputedly constructed without samples all sounds created by Kirby himself. Yet it still exudes a melancholic quality recognisable from the artist's work as The Caretaker, its elegiac drift establishing and sustaining a mood of loss and absence. This is also detectable in the titles of each disc: "When We Parted My Heart Wanted To Die", "Sadly, The Future Is No Longer What It Was" and "Memories Live Longer Than Dreams" The album title itself is highly suggestive. Kirby empathising with the state of isolation and erasure endured by the 'losers' whose place in collective memory is, at best, uncertain

As this collection is being touted as his most personal 'personal' work to date, it's not inappropriate to remark on the journey the artist has undergone from the violent iconoclasm of V/Vm – which launched assaults on mainstream pop stars along with electronica's most sacred of cows, Aphex Twin – to the poignancy of his latest effort The older we get, the more we lose, and with *History* Kirby appears to be taking stock of his and his generation's gradual disenchantment Whereas his work as The Caretaker acknowledges the possibility of magic – the source material deriving from songs which view love as capable of transcending even death – this new music confronts the listener with a sadness that cannot be escaped by earthly or supernatural means With its stately piano, ice-sheet synth and billowing clouds of all-enveloping Noise, *History* offers nothing less than a complete immersion in grief, stubbornly denying the listener the comfort of catharsis Beautiful, but not for the light-hearted

Joseph Stannard

Christine Kubisch

La Ville Magnétique/The Magnetic City

Ville De Poitiers CD

Licht Himmel

Gasometer Oberhausen CD

There's an uncanny dimension to sound artist Christine Kubisch's recent disclosures of electromagnetic reality Her electrical walks' journeys on foot through public spaces wearing sensitive wireless headphones, make audible an environment of droning, pulsing, crackling waves that emanate from security gates, computers, public transport systems, cell phones and innumerable other familiar sources The experience reveals how closely attuned we are to our own frequencies, at home in a world defined by the structural limits of our senses Step beyond those limits and another model of reality becomes apparent

The Magnetic City, mixed from the wanderings of 24 volunteers through the streets of Poitiers, incorporates occasional voices and readymade musical snippets picked up, like those hidden frequencies, through electromagnetic induction Its impact is less dramatically unsettling than a first-hand electrical walk, but the recording preserves a fascinating secret music that emerges when our scope as receivers is expanded

Kubisch's *Licht Himmel* is a beautiful stereo mix of a 14 channel composition Ambient music that is purposeful and durable In Oberhausen, in Germany's once industrial Ruhr region, there's a vast 1920s gas tank Kubisch created a sound and light installation designed to transform that functional structure into "a space of contemplation and magic". Trautonium – an electronic instrument contemporary with the gasometer's construction – and latterday synthesizer blend with strange glass instruments, chiming metal bowls, ringing tuning forks and bells, spring drums, double bass, human voice, field recordings of the natural world and its electromagnetic shadow Kubisch and her associates, including Cluster's Hans-Joachim Roedelius, create an iridescent sonic poetry. Another route beyond the limits of the obvious

Julian Cowley

Piotr Kurek

Lectures

Crónica CD/Download

After an opening passage of music, the unmistakable voice of Cornelius Cardew is heard, refined and almost prissy in lecture mode: "I don't know how many of you are musically educated" before going on to explain how indeterminacy might be applied in a performance situation: material specified or elided, rules to be followed, broken or ignored Later instructions are more specific, but increasingly woven into a rich, almost lilting electroacoustic background that marks something of a departure from Warsaw based Piotr Kurek's more familiar breakcore mode as Slepcy

Lectures was originally written for a Cardew event organised under the heading Zakrzywienia Igly in October 2007 The original aim was to perform a number of Cardew pieces, but it was decided instead to use material from his recordings as a basis for improvisation with additional (unspecified) instruments in the mix Kurek secured the help of the composer's son Walter Cardew to gain access to unreleased lecture and rehearsal material, some of which is incorporated here What's intriguing about *Lectures* is precisely the impossibility of telling what is Cardew and

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JASON ADASIEWICZ'S ROLLDOWN

Varmint

The music on *Varmint* is swinging and accessible but also very modern and forward-looking. Their sound combines Blue Note's classic, avant-leaning '60s albums with contemporary drive, swing, energy, and attack. *Varmint* features six new compositions by Adasiewicz and a tune written by Andrew Hill.

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Multitude, Solitude

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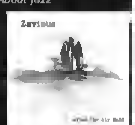
"...a welcome reminder of Smith's continued importance in the continuum of creative improvised music." — *All About Jazz*



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what not, and to what extent the music heard relates to, deviates from or ignores the verbal instructions that break through the surface. It's an unsettling process, akin to watching someone make pancakes while a voiceover describes how to transect a duodenal ulcer.

Or maybe pot-throwing would be a better example: for Cornelius's father was a fine potter and it was said of a Cardew cup – as John Tilbury relates – that unlike most fine craft it seamed unaffected by damage: dirt or fragmentation remaining a Cardew cup no matter what. So with the son's music. Ordinarily, a project like this would be drab palimpsest, imposing borrowed authority in place of attained form. Remarkably, Cardew's spirit shines through at every turn, his 'authority' a subversion of authority, the actual sounds all the more effective a collaboration because they in no way resemble anything Cardew might have done even if he were responsible for much of the sonic material here. This isn't a complacent irony, but testimony to the abiding strength of *The Great Learning*.

Brian Morton

Joke Lanz & Rudolf Eb.er
Akustische Aktion. Zurich 1991
Pan Act LP

Usually months on records sing, sometimes they speak. On this one they are heard eating, chewing, salivating, emitting belches. Rudolf Eb'er (Runzelstirn & Gurgelstock) and Joke Lanz (Sudden Infent) are having a meal, at Zürich's Rote Fabrik venue, in 1991. The occasion lives on vinyl, the moist and fleshy slurps, the noisy clatter of tableware and cutlery. It recalls – inevitably – "Alan's Psychedelic Breakfast" on Pink Floyd's *Atom Heart Mother*, but without the psychedelia and the small talk. And the clatter is far more vivid. It makes me speculate a little on consumption and need, on art and sustenance, on communal ritual. But when questioned on these issues, *Akustische Aktion. Zurich 1991* stays mute.

Zürich, after all, is where dada was born; Cabaret Voltaire is still there. And this is dada prefixed with multiple neos. Thought, according to anti-idealist dada anti-theorist Tristan Tzara, is made in the mouth. This is sound art made in the mouth. It's corporeal thought, thoughtless thought, spawned out of Fluxus, Viennese Actionism and punk. Original dada, nearly a century ago, insisted on physical presence in reaction to the statistical ghosts and dismemberment of mass slaughter and trench warfare. You might listen to this record and think of current atrocities where the material world and its inherent values are sacrificed to some unreal ideal. Or you might laugh, groan, yawn or shout at the wall before heading to the kitchen for a snack.

Jnhen Cowley

Lightning Bolt
Earthly Delights
Load CD/LP/Download

Listening to the fifth outing by Providence duo Lightning Bolt brings to mind the title of the 1962 debut album by US post-punk legends Hüsker Dü, *Land Speed Record*, and not only because of the velocity and intensity with which the duo deliver their psychedelic splatter racket. Lightning Bolt (drummer/vocalist Brian Chippendale and bassist Brian Gibson) represent an evolution, possibly the terminal point, of early 80s mutent hardcore as exemplified by Hüsker Dü, Chrome, Meat Puppets, The Butthole Surfers and Minutemen. Partly because of the way in which they screamed out of Rhode Island with a visceral energy that rock'n'roll but lost during the 90s, it has been tempting to view this outfit as though antecedents were unthinkable. And yet, listening to "Colossus" from *Earthly Delights*, it's hard to miss the roaring echo of The Buttholes' iconoclastic "Sweet Loaf" from 1987's *Locust Abortion Technician*: a perverse derailing of Black Sabbath's ode to the demon weed "Sweet Leaf". Here, Lightning Bolt seem to be launching an assault on Blue Öyster Cult's sardonically monolithic "Godzilla", itself a pastiche of Sebbath's "Iron Man".

On the other hand, considering how adeptly Chippendale and Gibson have fashioned their inspirations into their own microgenre, we might expect them to dig themselves deeper into a circular furrow until they burn out, leaving behind a smoking nugget of obsolescence. Thankfully, an insistence on perpetual movement informs their trajectory as much as their technique. Hence the riffs of "Sound Guardien" and "Nation Of Boar" are noticeably boogified – Foghat gone howling – while "Flooded Chamber" and "Funny Farm" betray a hitherto concealed Country influence, the former opening with a spiral of trebly noise from Gibson, resembling nothing so much as bluegrass fiddle. "Rain On Lake I'm Swimming In" suggests a further regression of Meat Puppets' "Swimming Ground" with its splashy reverb and feral chirrup, and the album's tumultuous 11-minute closer "Transmissionary" is uncharacteristically measured and insistent, gradually gathering force rather than spunking its load in one volcanic blast.

While the wind tunnel dynamics and breathless immediacy that suffused the pair's earlier recordings are still in evidence, the aforementioned tweaks prevent Lightning Bolt from becoming an antirely r*shoble* proposition. Which, frankly, is the last thing anyone needs right now.

Joseph Stannard

Mapstation
The Africa Chamber
~scape CD/LP

Düsseldorf's Stefan Schneider has served time in both Kraidler and To Rococo Rot groups with a grounding in textural and rhythmic exploration. As Mapstation, he has incorporated African elements into his electronic compositions while retaining a clear sense of his own musical identity. The title *The Africa Chamber* suggests ethnicity taken from one context into another, an enforced artificiality which Schneider seems happy to embrace rather than make attempts to circumvent it. The album includes contributions from, among others, trombonist Annie Whitehead and Afrobeat percussionist Nicholas Addo-Nettey, aka Pax Nicholes, onetime member of Fela Kuti's Afrike 70. These bring a warm, collaborative quality to Schneider's work.

Much of the music here is percussion based, be it electronic clicks and flutters or more 'organic' sounds, but Schneider's quasi-ethnic soundscapes combine abstract sketches with more visceral structures to form a unified whole. There are Eno-esque synth tones bolstered by faux-tropical field noises, sparse percussive pulses, languorous brass riffs and fragile minimalist melody clusters. This could all sound terribly precious and shamelessly evocative of the worst kind of cultural tourism, except that by selfconsciously embracing his inauthenticity Schneider alchemises his music into something special, where a DIY Afro fantasie perfectly merges with a wider range of sonnds. Within these deceptively sparse structures and understated textures something quite remarkable is going on.

Tom Ridge

Mordant Music
SyMptoMs
Mordant Music CD

British hauntologists Mordant Music have always been as much about putrescence as spectrality. What fascinates them is not so much the spirits of dead forms as their carcass. Decay and rot – with their capacity to change a single fixed form into a swarming multiplicity – preside over Mordant's anti-lifeworld. Mordant also belong to a very British lineage of nonsense. Beron Mordent's lyrics, much more in evidence here than on *Dead Air*, are evocative but intractable puzzles that recall Carroll, Edward Lear or – for an electronic music precedent – Eno's lyrics on his early 1970s records. Intimate yet impersonal, melancholic yet humorous, Mordant remain inscrutable, anomalous.

The tracks on *SyMptoMs* are like Rorschach blots made of mildew: inviting interpretation even as they frustrate it. They are fermented from a mulch found in the dustbins of UK dance music and popular culture: arpeggiated simulated strings, fragments of drum machine, misplaced dubstep bass-ooze, flashes of synthesizer glimmer. "Where Can You Scream" sounds like an old folk song rerecorded by half-forgotten post-rockers Disco Inferno. On "Belgian Blues" and "In Truth Is Wine" the Baron's radio-crackle vocals boom out over ruined rave wastelands. "(D) Comments" is a little radiophonic skit reminiscent of Bellbny Poly.

It's easy enongh to prodnce music that is an eclectic malange of influences, but Mordant's achievement is to make something consistent out of all this genre slurry. Again like the Eno of the early 70s Mordant can also be masters of obliqua sadness. "Another Uncompletad Dome" is like Vangelis's *Blade Runner* soundtrack rewritten for the dying days of New Labour, while the wounded vocal refrain of "Sirocco Swirl (Deluded Walker Demo)" – Mordant sounds like a tramp mumbling a barely remembered nursery rhyme in a midnight alleyway – is one of the most doleful things I've heard this year.

Mark Fisher

Niobe
Blockbird's Echo
Tomlab CD/LP

Niobe aka Yvonne Cornelius is a Cologne based singer. For her third album she has asked New York based avant gardist Aki Onda to produce – Onda has had a commercial producer's career alongside his cassette-tape manipulating activities – and so a bunch of New York's finest leftfielders crops up throughout *Blockbird's Echo*. DJ Olive spins decks and Shahzad Ismally parps a Moog for the bouncing "Cadillac Night". Doug Wieselman's bass clarinet freaks out when a shark suddenly appears ("A Shark"), and David Grubbs even gets to sing an impatient love duet with Niobe ("Time Is Kindling") over Thomas Arseneult's whizz-bang bonfire of electronics.

Mind you, Niobe is pretty leftfield herself. On her own she sounds like Billie Holiday's daughter trying to program her Casio keyboard. My guess is that she's also interested in 1940s close harmony groups like The Andrews Sisters, but her songwriting style is utterly contemporary: grab two chords and kick them around the studio till something sticks. This simple but scatty approach is audible in several of the shorter, plainer tracks here. Where Onda has reworked the songs there is more colour. Even though he may only use a guest's contribntion for a few notes, the result is usually an intriguing soundworld. So Eyvind Kang's viola enhances "Silicone Soul", while the dark rock guitar of "Blue Wolf" gives way to a harp and bass guitar dialogue. "My Conversion" breaks down to allow Nils Ostendorf's trumpet to engage with Niobe's voice alone. The presence of intimate moments like these certainly make the record engaging. Cologne vs New York: off the wall, but pretty good fun.

Clive Bell

nmperign
Ommatidia
Intransitive CD/Download

Five years ago soprano saxophonist Bhob Rainey, who is half of nmperign, expressed his appreciation for decay, particularly the way it imparts an impression of a sound's lifespan outside of the piece of music it happens to be passing through. Decomposition permeated their last album *Love Me Two Times*. In partnership with tape loop manipulator Jason Lescalleet, Rainey and trumpet-playing partner Greg Kelley used variations in tape and microphone quality, Alvin Lucier-inspired copying techniques, and some good old-fashioned cut and paste to transform spare utterances into artfully blurred, deliriously outsized and drastically aged distortions.

From the get-go it's bean hard to reconcile the sounds nmperign make with the acoustic instruments they use to make them, but after that record they couldn't take decay any further without plunging into pure Noise. *Ommatidia* seems like an about-face. It is their first in a proper studio, a strange place for musicians who once recorded an album on a micro-cassette player, and the focus is squarely on the attunement that Kelley and Rainey have evolved over 11

Bill Orcutt
A New Way To Pay Old Debts
Palaeia LP

They may seem poles apart, but the guitar deconstructions of former Harry Pussy member Bill Orcutt on *A New Way To Pay Old Debts* place him alongside the likes of John Fahey. During the latter years of his life, Fahey deliberately turned his back on his earlier fingerpicking style to explore other ways of how to play solo guitar. To do this he allowed himself to slip into a state of altered consciousness – his fingers instinctively found the notes on the fretboard, but his imagination was unleashed from the routine of chord changing to discover new sounds. Meanwhile Orcutt, on *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*, has absorbed himself in the work of blues legends 'Mississippi' Fred McDowell and Lightnin' Hopkins, flamenco guitarist Ramon Montoya, Bahamian guitar master Joseph Spence and British improvisor Derek Bailey, whose influence echoes loudest here, and crashes these styles together with such energy that his guitar sounds in danger of splintering into matchwood.

Orcutt emerged from the ripped and torn environs of the early 1990s US punk rock/hardcore scene as the guitarist for Harry Pussy, the group he co-founded in 1992 in Miami, Florida with Adris Hoyos on drums and vocals and himself on guitar. Up until their demise in 1997, Harry Pussy performed and recorded an extreme version of hardcore that was stripped bare of melody, rhythm or chorus, leaving only the aftershock of Hoyos's piercing vocal and Orcutt's tangle of broken guitar music dangling dangerously in the air.

Before ending the group, Orcutt and Hoyos collaborated on *Let's Build A Pussy*, an obscure double LP that was constructed from a single one-second recording of Hoyos screaming that Orcutt – credited as playing 'mouse' – had digitally stretched out to fill all four sides of the album. Described by one disgruntled reviewer as "a kiss goodbye turned into a very gradually uncurled middle finger", the bulk of Harry Pussy's fanbase regarded it as something intended to confound and snub any feelings of loyalty they might have felt towards the group. In a similar way that many of Fahey's early admirers felt distanced by his conversion to improvisation and Noise on albums such as *Womblife* and *City Of Refuge*. By daring to transplant the root of Harry Pussy's sound (Hoyos's vocal) and place it in a different area of music (minimalism), Orcutt had laid to rest the bones of his old group.

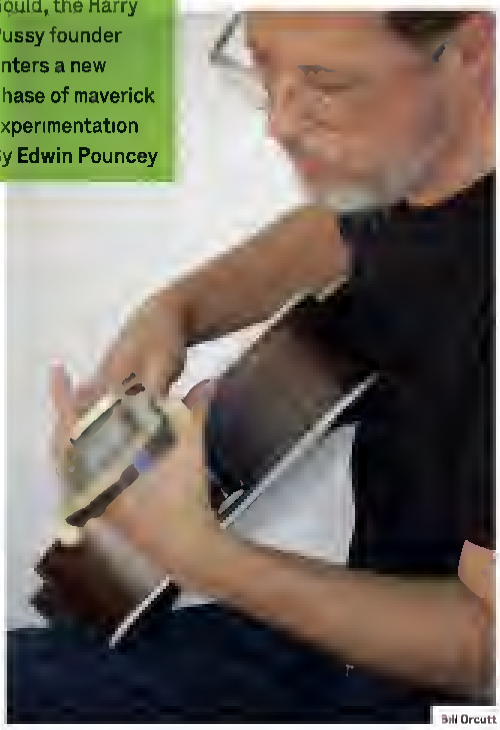
Any attempt by Orcutt to completely exorcise the spectre of Harry Pussy from his latest work – for solo acoustic guitar – has been only partly successful, however. While continuing the confrontational and experimental trajectory of their swansong, the minimalist curve of that final work has been replaced with a frenzied maximalism that admirers of the group will surely relate to – except that his playing on *A New Way To Pay Old Debts* sounds like no other guitar sound you've ever heard in your life.

Orcutt is playing a vintage acoustic Kay guitar equipped with a DeArmond pickup that he bought on the street in Gainsville, Florida, where he went to university. After the neck was broken and subsequently repaired, the guitar was downtuned so as to withstand the tension of the strings, and played with the A and D strings removed – something the guitarist has done since the 1980s. Rippling with short bursts of snagging chords and skittering notes, songs such as "My Reckless Parts", "Sad News From Korea" and the title track have a life of their own, as Orcutt struggles to control the gush of notes and dislocated rhythm that flows from his fingers. Not every track is composed this way, however – on "Cold Ground" the pace is less frantic and more subdued, with the guitar sections spaced apart to allow an uneasy, funereal calm.

Cecil Taylor and Canadian classical pianist Glenn Gould were also musical touchstones in the creation of *A New Way* and there is a distinct keyboard element to Orcutt's style that mirrors the precise methods of both players, as well as the player-piano compositions of Conlon Nancarrow. The influence can be plainly heard midway through "Lip Rich", where the reverberating guitar strings against the pickup are strained to the point where they sound like Taylor's stabbed piano keys. Orcutt adds his own voice to the mix, and his rough hollering, along with the interruption of a phone ringing and the noise of traffic outside, brings a sense of place to the recording.

Including his voice in this way, Orcutt pays tribute to Gould who, as instructed by his music tutor mother, would sing the notes to Bach's *Goldberg Variations* as he played them. Gould also decreed that "no piano need feel duty-bound to always sound like a piano". By the way he reinvents his guitar playing here, just as Fahey reinvented his own before, Orcutt has surely taken such a dictum to heart. □

Rewiring his guitar under the spell of Cecil Taylor and Glenn Gould, the Harry Pussy founder enters a new phase of maverick experimentation
By **Edwin Pouncey**



Bill Orcutt

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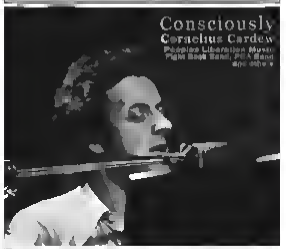


years of playing together. In a certain sense, Nmperign have never sounded better. The album is named for the discrete elements that make up an insect's eye, and the hi-fi recording renders their instruments' smallest sounds with sharp clarity. It also allows the two men to plant tiny gestures that indicate that they aren't over erosion just yet. On "Variation II", a brief silence interrupts a wall of hiss, like a dropout on an old cassette. And just over a minute into "Glass" they chip away at the improvising musician's image of serendipitousness when ribbons of striated breath sounds give way to an immaculate replica of the whistles of dropping bombs which seem to land near the huffing of an old steam locomotive.

If the whole performance was so broad, it would seem like a series of cheap shots, by delivering them as brief asides, Nmperign use such measures to keep the listener on the edge of their seat throughout *Ommatidia*'s 37 minutes of hyper-detailed microsound.

Bill Meyer

Orchestre Poly-Rythmo De Cotonou
Volume Two: Echos Hypnotiques
Analog Africa CD/2×LP

Whether you first heard Orchestra Poly-Rythmo De Cotonou on the *Love Is A Real Thing* or *African Scream Contest* compilations, or on one of the collections that have come out under their own name in recent years, the response is the same. After the thrill of discovery there's the question: how could an ensemble so great have remained unheard for so long?

Extant for 40 years and responsible for hundreds of recordings, they haven't exactly been hiding, but during their heyday in the 1970s they were so successful that they didn't need to leave Africa. During those years they scored numerous hits in their native Benin, Nigeria and Ghana, and their versatile mastery of funk, Afrobeat and Latin rhythms lured singers from various West African nations to come and record with them in Benin's capital, Cotonou. Intercontinental attention might have come in the 1980s, but the death of two key musicians – lead guitarist/organist Bernard "Papillon" Zoundegnon and drummer Yehoussi Leopold, who both shine on *Echos Hypnotiques* – combined with Benin's economical and political troubles to enforce a lower profile at home and frustrate their overseas ambitions until archival releases paved the way for a European tour in 2009.

Echos Hypnotiques, Analog Africa's second volume devoted to The Orchestre, is also roughly concurrent with the set that Soundway issued five years ago. While each collection is pretty diverse, this one holds a stylistic middle ground between the rawness of *The Vodoun Effect*, which was drawn from singles recorded in backyards and living rooms for fan-run indie labels, and the slicker, more horn-dominated fare on *The Kings Of Benin Urban Groove*. The Albarika Store label, once Benin's premier imprint, originally released *Echos*'s 15 tracks between 1969–79. They enjoy somewhat posher production values than are heard on *Vodoun Effect*, but the performances are just as incendiary, the synthesis of American funk grooves and Indigenous Vodoun rhythms equally irresistible. The opening bassline on "Azoo De Ma Gnin Kpevi" is as heavy and unstoppable as anything Jah Wobble played for P.I.L., the way Papillon snakes an Ernie Isley-like fuzztone lead through horn charts as tangled as tree roots on the epic "Gen Tche Kpo" is deeply psychedelic. And the mesh of James Brown-like vocal exhortations, stinging guitars and a stuttering sakpata rhythm (originally conceived to fight smallpox) on "Houe Djein Nada" shows just how they earned the appellation Poly-Rythmo. If the recent tour is a well deserved victory lap, *Echos Hypnotiques* shows how The Orchestre won the race.

Bill Meyer

Orthodox
Sentencia
Alone CD

Orthodox were once Mistel, but are now much more. The Spanish trio's 2006 debut *Gran Poder* was Doom Metal that lived up to the group's name, never straying from the path of thumping drums and monstrous, crushing riffs. The following year, though, on *Amanecer En Puerta Oscura*, they began to display a deviant streak, incorporating trumpet, clarinet and piano in addition to guitar, bass and drums, and approaching free jazz as often as Metal.

Electric guitars only appear on this third album's opening track, "Marcha De La Santa Sangre". It has a Western or Spanish feel, like an alternate soundtrack to the booze-soaked Mexico-set Sam Peckinpah revenge flick *Bring Me The Head Of Alfredo Garcia*. The 28 minute "Ascension" making up the bulk of *Sentencia* features piano, clarinet, brushed drums and an upright bass that's strummed, plucked and bowed, and a keening male vocalist who seems to be channelling Abbey Lincoln more than Ozzy Osbourne. The disc closes with "Y La Muerte No Tendra Dominio", a duo for organ, drums and massively distorted percussion. At this point, all Orthodox share with Doom or any other style of Metal is a sense of spiritual questing and a fondness for ritualised pursuit of catharsis.

Phil Freeman

Michael Parsons
Piano Music 1993–2007
MPC CD

Parsons, like John Tilbury, the pianist on this CD, was closely associated with Cornelius Cardew, but remains an important exponent of experimental music, which Cardew came to reject as elitist. Cardew once opined that there was more value in a crowd singing *The Internationale* than in the entire European avant garde, a contention that might have seemed plausible in the context of the unrest of 1968 and its aftermath. However, it soon became clear that the public in general – and the working class that Cardew courted in particular – was equally uninterested in *The Internationale* and the avant garde, demonstrating a distaste for being patronised or being baffled by technicalities.

Whatever the associations of Parsons's art, it's the kind of music that one feels more people would enjoy if only you could get them to listen to it without preconceptions. Every piece in this collection has an austere beauty and most of them have a stern calmness that facilitates concentration on the sounds and structures for their own sake: shorn – except, perhaps, for *Krapp Music*, inspired by Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* – of any obvious emotional, figurative or symbolic resonance.

This collection, according to Parsons, reflects an unresolved tension between formal and informal tendencies, between classical and experimental aspects of his music over the last 15 years. He uses series, sets or pitch sequences as the framework for several of these pieces, but develops or explores them with considerable freedom. In some pieces the performer is free to choose duration, dynamics and articulation. Parsons says that these pieces are "more to do with the exploration of piano sonority than with linear continuity": the savouring of sonorities is central to virtually all the works presented here.

Parsons's writing is part of a tradition that eschews the drama and machismo displayed in so much of the core piano literature, just because a concert grand can roar out thick chords or operate like a percussion orchestra doesn't mean that it should. The music on this album is often fragile, frequently graceful, always thoughtful and intriguing.

Barry Witherden

Jessica Pavone
Songs Of Synesty And Solitude
Tzadik CD

Violist Jessica Pavone, still best known for her improvisatory work with Anthony Braxton and her Brooklyn based duo with guitarist Mary Halvorson, has written a suite of pieces for string quartet, with double bass in place of one of the format's customary violins. The title implies homage to Leonard Cohen's *Songs Of Love And Hate*, one of Pavone's acknowledged sources of inspiration. These 11 instrumentals are songs, too. In scale and shape, wordless distillations of feeling and reflection, brief musical narratives of relationship, star-blest or star-crossed.

Titles such as "There's No Way To Say", "It's Come To This" or "Housework" suggest that complex forms and displays of technical ingenuity are not high on Pavone's agenda. Rather it's a bittersweet chamber music evoking accord or aloneness that she is after: simply rendered and neatly crafted. And that's what she achieves with help from four members of The Toomai String Quartet. The inclusion of double bass heightens both mellowness and melancholy, and it serves as a pivot for elegant dance rhythms that crop up among the wistful melodies. Pavone prioritises clarity, as a good songwriter should: only rarely do moments of harmonic anxiety stress the contours, ruffle the surface and stray into the domain of modernistic writing for string quartet. Such clarity has broad potential appeal, but it also has its price. For my taste it's all a little too chaste, lacking the pungency of Cohen's studies in abandonment and violation.

Julian Cowley

John Phillips
Man On The Moon
Varèse Sarabande CD
By the time Neil Armstrong took his first small step on the moon in the late summer of 1969, singer-songwriter John Phillips was estranged from the other members of 1960s chart-toppers The Mamas And The Papas, living in a Los Angeles mansion and taking huge quantities of cocaine. Obsessively running an early videotape recording of the lunar landing, he soon came up with the grandiose plan for an ambitious stage musical based around human space exploration. With the simple title *Space*, it would feature a large cast, elaborate costumes, a 'zero-gravity' ballet and a leading role for Phillips's third wife, South African fashion model Genevieve Waite. After six years of work, the dream lived and died over five nights at a Broadway theatre. Now titled *Man On The Moon*, it boasted a small cast, cheap-looking costumes and some tapdancing from Waite, who still had a leading role, despite her somewhat limited singing and acting range. Wholeheartedly panned by the critics, the doomed production pretty much closed before it opened.

Some of the factors involved in this glorious blunder are easy to identify. Phillips's swelling drug consumption didn't help, nor did Andy Warhol's supine involvement as the show's producer. However, a close listen to the songs Phillips recorded for *Man On The Moon* suggests it was really more a matter of bad timing than anything else. Singing about outer space in 1975, after the glittery sci-fi kitsch of David Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust* album and Lou Reed's sarcastic, Bowie-produced "Satellite Of Love" had to be a challenge – a little like arriving on the Moon only to discover someone else has got there before you. Phillips consequently plays it smart and sweet, keeping a light, ironic distance to his delivery. Even when performed in the studio by Phillips himself with a simple accompaniment of acoustic guitar, piano and bass, songs like "Close Your Eyes" and "Yesterday I Left The Earth" still contain echoes of *Ziggy*-era Bowie, while the throwaway rocker "Mission Control" and the soft-shoe camp of "Oh Andy My Assistant" recall moments from Reed's *Transformer*. No wonder Phillips's next big project was writing the soundtrack score for Nic Roeg's dystopian sci-fi flick *The Man Who Fell To Earth*, starring Bowie as an alien stranded among uncomprehending human beings. By then Phillips must have known exactly how that felt.
Ken Hollings

Position Normal
Position Normal
Rum MC/Download
Five years before Ghost Box opened up shop in 2004, an album appeared which would prove to be a future echo of the whole hauntology shebang, glued together from bits of cheap car boot vinyl: samples of children's voices, twanging, detuned guitar and spectral vocals. 1999's *Stop Your Nonsense* quietly heralded the emergence of an enigmatic outfit named Position Normal, whose press photos depicted two figures in Parka jackets with yellow beachballs for heads, and whose debut album offered a kaleidoscopic window onto a Britain constructed out of fragmented memories and obsolete technology.

In 2002, Chris Bailiff released *Goodly Time*, a song based, vinyl-only affair commissioned to soundtrack the work of fashion designer Eley Kishimoto. Since then he's maintained a low profile while keeping the Position Normal name alive via a strong internet presence. Given the Ferric monicker, the creaky nature of Bailiff's music and his apparently undimmed obsession with memory, it's fitting that the third Position Normal album should be made available on cassette only (though a download of all 21 tracks is provided with each tape). Featuring pieces that predate *Stop Your Nonsense* alongside new compositions, this release is very much in the same rickety, sampladelic spirit as the debut, although Bailiff's own vocals are more prominent and the children's voices are eerily absent. In fact, the spoken samples used here are often redolent of senile dementia: *"It's good to be laying down again..."* slurs a warped voice on "New Biz", while half of "Fart In A Bottle" is taken up with the scatological ranting of some furious old curmudgeon. Bailiff's obsession with memory necessarily entails a fascination with decay – another neat parallel with the notoriously degradeable format he's chosen for this release.

As with Ghost Box and Mordant Music, Position Normal's mnemonic explorations are leavened with oblique jocularity (intentionally or otherwise). "Grundigs", in which a pitched-down Bailiff meditates on the availability of audio equipment, sounds an awful lot like a lo-fi skit on Koda 9 & The Spaceape, while "Fanfukintastic" seems to derive from hard experience while offering a humorous overview of the project as a whole. *"What'd I do? Erase the lot – fan – fucking – tastic."*
Joseph Stannard

Radian
Chimeric
Thrill Jockey CD/Download
Over the last decade, Austrian unit Radian have released a trickle of albums working loosely within the structures of post-rock – a designation strengthened by having John McEntire produce their *rec.extern* album of 2002 and releasing their last two albums on Thrill Jockey.

Chimeric, their fourth album, straddles the line between spontaneous live performance and controlled, sequenced events. The raw material of the album was recorded in Radian's rehearsal space. The drums, guitar and bass are twisted into a spare, naked wiry sound that darkens the whole album into a noirish tone. Some of these trio passages of electric free jazz remain almost unaltered, as on the longest track "Feedbackmikro/City Lights" which quietly prowls the long shadows of a city on its way to a muted assignation. The album at times becomes silent, with only the strangled breath of an acoustic guitar to be heard, as on "Chimera", or raises itself up on a roll of drums and cymbals like a fog enveloping the back streets at dusk.

However, on other tracks, the elements are spliced, sequenced and controlled into glitches and sonic ephemera. "Git Cut Noise" splutters from fragments and shards of accidental guitar sounds and amplifier buzz before building into a wall of sound. Its twin, "Git Cut Variant", is a brief essay written with the same glitches, but this time resulting in an atmospheric blues.

The two tracks "Kinetak" and "Subcolours" make the most of this meeting between control and chaos. "Kinetak" falters along like a film projector with a broken sprocket, ticking and fractured, an impatient urban Krautblues. "Subcolours" is lost in a mirrored room of guitar glitches, its rhythmic pulse agitated and conspiratorial.
Nick Senthgate

Eliane Radigue
Triptych
Important CD
Vice Versa, etc
Important 2×CD
With these two releases – important ones indeed – almost all of Eliane Radigue's non-site specific music has now appeared on CD (the exceptions being 1973's *Psi 847*, still inexplicably languishing in the vaults at Halana, and *Noldjorlak II* and *III*, both of which are due out soon on Shiiin).

Conceived for an exhibition at the Lara Vincy Gallary in Paris in 1970, *Vice Versa, etc* was a box – only ten of them were produced – containing a stereo magnetic tape whose two tracks of looped feedback could be played individually or together at any speed. Similar DIY instructions accompanied the previous year's double 7" *a−b=a+b*. With *Vice Versa, etc* there's the added possibility of playing the tape in either direction. By way of invitation to listeners to experiment at home, Important has released the work as two CDs, one with the stereo tape playing forwards, the other backwards, at four different speeds, "corresponding to the tape recorders of the time", Radigue biographer Manu Holterbach notes in his sleevenotes – but if you've got music software of your own, there's nothing to stop you loading up the tracks and making your own mix.

These evanescent drones are exquisite at any speed, but one feels Holtarbach is stretching it a bit in describing *Vice Versa, etc* as "one of Radigue's most important compositions". The magic of her music – and the reason she might turn out in the long run to be more influential on a younger generation of composers and improvisors alike than any of her minimalist or musique concrète contemporaries – lies in its ability to evolve almost imperceptibly over time, drawing the ear into its mysterious heart with uncanny precision and inexplicable mastery.

As such, *Vice Versa, etc* is a welcome and overdue addition to the Radigue discography, but *Triptych* is the real gem here. By the time she composed the three-movement piece in 1978, to a commission from choreographer Douglas Dunn for a performance in Nancy, Radigue had made two important discoveries: the first was the ARP synthesizer, her instrument of choice

Phil Kline
Around the World in a Daze

"A landmark work... unprecedented."
– John Schaefer

"Sensational"
– New York Magazine

"The electronic experimenter... is hard at work."
– The New York Times

"Truly a remarkable sonic experience."
– Audiophile Audition

"It fascinates...amazing"
– Sequenza21

"Ear-opening adventures."
– Stereophile

"Extraordinary"
– Vital Weekly

Around the World in a Daze immerses listeners in a tidal wave of hyperdense bells, an ethereal Ethel quartet, a wailing wall, soaring violinistics, a weird madrigal, and 15,000 African parrots. Starkland commissioned this 65-minute surround-sound composition to premiere exclusively on this DVD. A second Extras disc includes a music video and a 34 minute interview with composer Phil Kline.

www.starkland.com

ever since and what she calls "the most important experience in my life" – Tibetan Buddhism. *Triptych*, which marked a return to music after four years spent in intensive study with her master Pawo Rinpoche, paves the way to the string of Buddhism-inspired masterpieces the composer produced in the two following decades. Merely describing it – "the first movement sweeps slowly up and down through the overtones of a low D" – makes it sound dreadfully banal. It isn't. It's one of the most enthralling and – whether you're religious or not – genuinely mystical experiences in modern music.
Dan Warburton

***Rinse 10* Mercus Nasty**
Various
Rinse CD
These days, when tuning into Rinse, London's foremost pirate radio station more often than not the sound is House, lowest common denominator dance music easily understood in straight four by four beats. This seeming regression of the UK underground scene, which for years has been an idiosyncratic haven for innovation in club trends – documented by Rinse's transmissions – is offset by the rise of Funky, the miscegenation of House and UK breaks 'n' bass which forms the setting for Rinse's latest mix CD by DJ Marcus Nasty.

As founder of Grime collective NASTY, Nasty's experience positions him well to locate the in-between points that make Funky noteworthy as a different, specifically British take on House. An added syncopation lends an almost Latin sinuousness, but it's the tough, sometimes menacing bass and synth lines, reminiscent of Grime, that really pull this microgenre into its own shape. Lil Silva is one of the best artists to illustrate this and, while he has no more than a few white labels out, the young producer's recurrence in Nasty's mix (six out of 29 tracks), as well as through London club sound systems throughout the past year, helps cement both his and Funky's status.

There's also a healthy representation of the other side of Funky, the one more akin to the US Funky House of the 90s, with big R&B vocals and feelgood simplicity. And while the sickliness of this style remains one of Funky's stumbling blocks, Nasty's hyperkinetic mix capitalises on the sugar rush. It's a well-balanced set that should appeal to both sides of the widening divide of Funky, held together by an urgency that can only be sated on the dancefloor.
Lisa Blanning

Rocky Mountain Low*, *The Colorado Musical Underground Of The Late 70s
Various
Hyperpycnal 2×LP
Punk in the UK arguably became more exciting and diverse after the initial wave which burned itself out in the process of razing the ground for the more extended experiments of post-punk. But the Americans did it ass-backwards, with pre-punk predating first wave UK punk, the most creative and formally radical phase of the new DIY ethic as the wasteland of the early 1970s gave way to Television, The Remones, Pere Ubu and an eventual deluge of groups caught between 60s and 70s garage modes.

Of course it took even longer to make it through to places like the Denver/Boulder area of Colorado. *Rocky Mountain Low*, a double LP retrospective of the late 1970s underground that gave the world the mixed blessing of Jello Biafra, captures a moment of flux and confusion that makes for some great listening. The set comes with a glossy booklet complete with in-depth artist histories and reproductions of memorabilia from the time. Just scanning the group pictures gives you a feel for how diverse and nascent the underground was at this point, with Dancing Assholes looking like a bunch of art-hippies, Driver like AC/DC Guys like The Runaways and only the suitably named Dirty Dogs anything like punks-as-punks. Dirty Dogs actually have more of a James Williamson/Stooges guitar hero edge to them, while Dancing Assholes are a much more primitive proposition than their mugshot would suggest, with a sociopathic homemade edge that could almost pass for something from Bruce Cole's Screamin' Mee-Mees. Indeed, Dancing Assholes have all sorts of interesting countercultural connections (as well as a drummer called Total Beatoff) with later member R Anthony Flea aka Geoffrey Fournier a collaborator with John Fahey and a star of Fahey's cryptic *Voice Of The Turtle* sleevenotes. Biafra takes lead vocals on Healers' "School Bus", more of a rant than a rocker but with a nicely fucked-up and formless feel. Ravers were the first group in Colorado to describe themselves as punk rock and they came out of The Ramones' school of crude amphetamine takes on 50s and 60s rock 'n' roll, as does Radio Pete, another 60s garage obsess ve.

Indeed, many of the groups documented here still have an umbilical link to rock 'n' roll and the rumours of punk alongside a visit by The Remones seem to have functioned more as a reconnection to the source than any kind of overthrowing of previous musical standards. Still, it liberated people to put on their own shows, to record singles in their bedroom and press them up themselves and to re-christen themselves things like Rikki Retardo and Connie Clit. *Rocky Mountain Low* does a good job of capturing the feel of punk as it played out in the more isolated corners of the map.
David Keenan

Roll Deep
Street Anthems
Roll Deep CD
Artists' retrospectives can't help but feel like an ending. East London's Roll Deep are still a going concern, but nowhere near to producing the same light and heat as they did from 2003–06 when they led Grime's first days of ultra-competitive menic activity, before the scene was stamped back down by major label indifference. *Street Anthems* – a truly apt title – collects their underground hits and also sees the first official release of tracks which once ruled pirate radio but which Roll Deep never found the time to press up in their glory days.

One of these, the legendary "Eskimo Vocal", still sounds like Grime's definitive statement. As Wiley's monumental riffs of synth-gloop are clawed at by two-step shevings, the MCs launch forward, pushing the track further into a place both febrile and coldly clear-eyed. It's a masterpiece and there's many more here. "Bounce", "Roll Deep Regular", "I Will Not Lose". Laying the foundation for Grime, these tracks are still unsurpassed. Roll Deep strung together some of the most exciting music of the preceding decade – Jungle, two-step Garage, and the grainy cinematic hiphop of Wu-Tang – and then pared everything down to the essentials necessary for brittle rushes of collective energy. Fundamentally, this music comes from the same place as The Sex Pistols' early singles.

As Roll Deep's dominance grew, their sound became thicker and more confident, but they remained capable of devastating force, as on "When I'm Ere" and "Celebrate". A teenage Dizzee Rascal appears on the early tracks and the comparison with him now is almost heartbreaking. Here, his lyrics skim across the beats like stones flung across a lake – rhythmic necessities don't seem to encumber him, don't weigh or tie him down, and yet he remains locked into the beat in the MCing equivalent of a Fred Astaire tap dance. The vulnerability of his crackling squawk hinted at demons and uncertainties beneath the braggadocio of his rhymes. Yet today, his once limitless potential is squandered on pop-electro.
Simon Hampson

The Slits
Trapped Animal
Narnack CD/Download
So much that dazzles about The Slits' original run from 1976 to 1981 comes from their disarming directness. The Sheggs-style incompetence of their earliest material, *Cut*'s famous half-naked cover and the way it both pre-empted moronic male lechery while ramping it up into stunning atavistic confrontation. But on *Trapped Animal* the music sounds direct only in the sense that stages like writing or editing seem to have been skipped. This incarnation features original members Ari Up and Tessa Pollitt supplemented with younger members Hollie Cook, Michelle Hill and Anna Schulte. But there's no sense of the group as performers, and the production and instrumentation suggest GarageBand presets. And 'preset' sums up The Slits' approach to genre in 2009 equally well, with punky reggae and roots in dub ticked off in cursory fashion, just as it was on *Revenge Of The Killer Slits*, the 2006 EP which marked the group's return.

The only elements that startle come from Ari Up's lyrics, and the surprise is not pleasant. Some songs are embarrassingly rudimentary. "Peer Pressure" or "Pay Rent" (*"We wanna pay rent with our passion/And we no wanna follow fashion"*) would be instantly rejected by the average chart pop writing team as too trite. "Lazy Slam" is dancehall pastiche, complete with Auto-Tune warble. The Slits' simplicity once had complex and seductive ramifications; this time that simplicity has been travestied into sheer aesthetic slackness.
Sam Davies

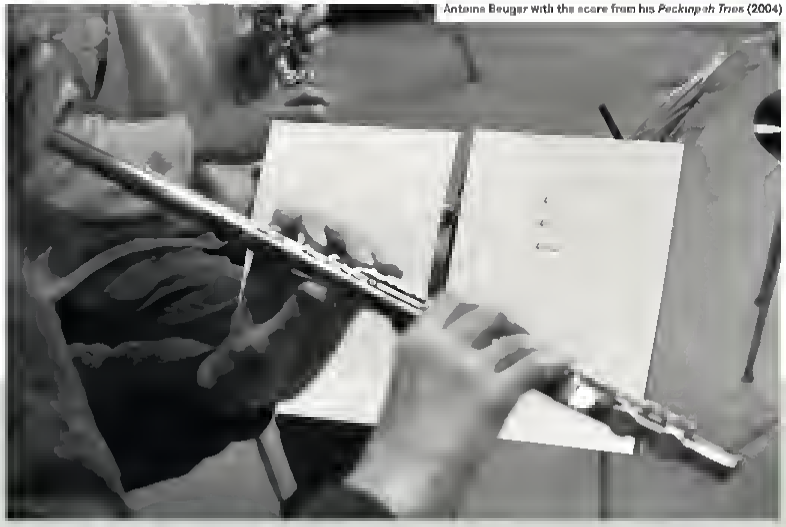
Shackleton
3 EPs
Perlon 3×12"
Despite its reputation for minimalist Techno, Berlin's Perlon label has always been too creatively wayward to fall into anything resembling a specific sound. Regardless, Shackleton's debut for the label, following his recent move to Berlin, sounds nothing like any Perlon record yet. This isn't garden variety dubstep, and it sure ain't Techno either.

Shackleton sticks with his customary palette: sampled African and Eastern drums, morbid sub-bass and oodles of murk. But there's also a newfound precision, as in the delicately stepping "No More Negative Thoughts", flecked with faintly hissing hi-hats and overdriven bleeps and plinking keys. They'd sound almost dainty if they weren't so spluttering and rapidfire. Individual elements – basslines, tambourine patterns, those ceaseless hand drums – might have a stronger presence than in Shackleton's previous records, but at the same time they nestle more comfortably within the folds of a given track. There's less mood for mood's sake.

"Sort of ramshackle" reads an engraving in one of the runout grooves, but every sound plays a role, even if it's only to mask another. From individual drum hits on up, everything feels like a cell within a cell, all parts of a beast that's too massive, too malleable to fully grasp. That extends to the level of the release itself, which despite its title feels like a cohesive whole – and possibly one that even points outside itself. The closing "Something Has Got To Give" is the record's subtlest and strangest, with six minutes of shakers and castanets anchoring an outbound fantasia of drones and muffled voices. With an empty space where Shackleton's customary drum riffs would be, it sounds like he's casting off familiar habits. One wonders if the title marks the closing of a chapter of his career.
Philip Sherburne

Sparks
The Seduction Of Ingmar Bergman
Lil' Beethoven CD
Since the unexpectedly effective reinvention on 2002's *Lil' Beethoven*, Californian duo Sparks (comprising brothers Ronald and Russel Mael) have embraced their new role as experimental pop auteurs with relish, releasing some of the most adventurous music of their career, informed equally by the elegance of the classical period, the sonic attack of The Bomb Squad, the wit of Cole Porter and the repetition of Philip Glass, with a bombastic quality reminiscent of Slovenian industrialists Laibach.

The Seduction Of Ingmar Bergman is an unconventional release even by Sparks' recent standards, being a musical commissioned by Swedish national public radio, the plot of which follows the fictional adventures of film director Ingmar Bergman in 1950s Hollywood. It could be argued that a concert of this kind would normally form the basis for a single Sparks song, to which the counter-argument might be that the average Sparks song contains such an abundance of



Antoine Beuger with the score from his *Peckinpah Trios* (2004)

Silence is part of a strategy of confrontation in the eclectic compositions of the **Wandelweiser** group. By **Will Montgomery**

Michael Pisaro
Hearing Metal 1
Edition Wandelweiser CD
Stefan Thut & Manfred Werder
Im Sefinental
Edition Wandelweiser CD
Antoine Beuger
Two Too (For Erwin-Josef Speckmann)
Edition Wandelweiser CD
Tom Johnson
Counting Keys
Edition Wandelweiser CD

Minimal tendencies in visual culture have long since had their radical edges blunted. The culture at large has bought, quite literally, into a bland Ikea-style modernism on a huge scale. Unadorned industrial spaces, from galleries to shops to clubs to lofts, are everyone's idea of a leisure environment. Yet in music the impulse to reduction can still pack a punch. Lately, the wires have been humming with discussion of Wandelweiser, a group of composers founded in 1992 and centred around Hean in western Germany. With improvisation widely practised across numerous genres of experimental and Reductionist music, composition is currently providing a fresh infusion of ideas.

It is only in recent years that the group's work has really begun to make itself felt outside contemporary composition circles. There are links between the group and the Tokyo based onkyo scene, and California based composer Michael Pisaro's works have been issued on various labels usually associated with improvisation. The group's co-founder Antoine Beuger has rejected the term 'Reductionism', remarking recently: "Whatever musical thing you are hearing, be it a tone or a phrase or a chord or a piece, is an infinity in itself." Surveying these overlapping areas of activity from the outside, though, it's clear that something along the lines of 'less is more' is an operative principle for all concerned.

The common thread in Wandelweiser music is a focus on the relationship between sound and silence. It is not unusual for composers to insert lengthy periods of silence into a piece, or to programme them in between sounded tracks on a CD. But silence, of course, is only ever 'silence'. The group is interested both in the ambience that surrounds musical gestures and the heightened intensity of individual sounds found within lagoons of silence. Yet, crucially, this does not make the work pretty or delicate or tastefully discreet. The group's music is uncompromisingly hostile to the possibility that 'silence' might be an emblem of tranquillity. "Silence has nothing to do with calmness or quietness," Beuger has said. "It cannot be found in nature. It occurs as an event, as a rupture into the situation one is in. It's not necessarily nice or beautiful, it may well be quite horrifying."

Despite the fascination with reduction, Wandelweiser's interests are eclectic, and previous works have formed connections with painting, poetry and philosophy. Beuger's composition *Calme Etendue (Spinoza)* filleted Spinoza's *Ethics* for monosyllabic words, drawing perhaps on Cage's treatment of Thoreau in *Empty Words*. He has also produced settings of Emily Dickinson's little poems and compositions inspired by the monochrome painter Marcia Hafif. Jürg Frey's *String Quartets* took a cue from another post-minimalist painter, Agnes Martin, and Michael Pisaro's *Harmony Series 11–16* CD featured treatments of work by such adepts at poetic reduction as George Oppen, Robert Lax and Robert Creeley.

The four most recent releases on the label are a varied bunch, with *Im Sefinental*, by Stefan Thut and Manfred Werder taking a selfconsciously conceptual approach to field recording, a post-Cageian area explored in previous Wandelweiser releases, most notably Pisaro's *Transparent Cities* CDs, which combine unremarkable urban field recordings with sine tones to produce a surprisingly challenging mixture of environmental and electronic sound. *Im Sefinental* contains two almost featureless half-hour recordings of rural ambience. Thut and Werder describe themselves as "performers" and aside from this flimsy conceit that's all, apparently, there is to it.

Antoine Beuger's *Two Too (For Erwin-Josef Speckmann)* is a double realisation of a Beuger composition for two performers. The first of the two pieces contains a series of short tones from soprano and clarinet. They never overlap and the music is all about the tension-filled space between sonic events. The second piece adds two more elements: Ko Ishikawa's sho and Rhodri Davies's Irish harp. It's not an entirely original recording – Ishikawa and Davies's realisation of the piece, issued on a Hibari CD some three years ago, is simply run alongside the voice and clarinet version. Ishikawa and Davies's extremely sparse contributions add great textural energy to the piece, making it a good foil to the rather sombre atmosphere of the first version.

The three works on Michael Pisaro's *Hearing Metal 1* are like mini-essays in resonance, each one a rich exploration of the complex tones of the tam-tam, played by Greg Stuart. Obvious comparisons in the world of improv are with the recent work of Mark Wastell and, further back, Eddie Prévost. What really makes the work stand out, however, is the subtle incorporation of sine tones, a Pisaro trademark, in the compositions. These, as with his field recordings, generate centres of tonal gravity, thickening the consistency of the work.

Tom Johnson is well known for his interest in schematic compositional plans intended to free himself from the limitations of subjective expression. "Block Design For Piano", perhaps the most appealing track on *Counting Keys*, is made from 330 arpeggios, all drawn from the same fixed 12-note chord. The ludic solo piano pieces on the CD, which are busy and quite openly oriented towards the realisation of abstract formulae, sit oddly alongside other Wandelweiser releases, lacking in their tinkling playfulness the quietly confrontational quality that typifies the catalogue.

Listening to a stack of Wandelweiser releases recently, I found myself admiring the material that resists the tendency of minimally oriented work to resolve into placidity. It's alarming, really, how pervasive the association of quietness with inattention is. If Beuger's 'horrifying' silences seem like a melodramatic response to all this, many of the releases certainly draw the listener in towards his suggestion of 'infinity' in small sounds. They insist on close listening. That Wandelweiser has maintained a group identity while maintaining an eclectic range of approaches is an achievement. But their real achievement is a flinty commitment to experimentation that has often led to music that's uncomfortable in all the best ways. □

Silvia Kamm-Gabathuler

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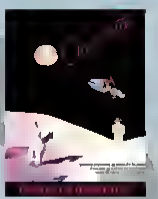
Ornette-



Underground filmmaker Shirley Clarke's rarely seen 1985 documentary is a portrait of Ornette Coleman. Using his composition "Skies of America" as a point of departure, Clarke explores a cinematic vocabulary that offers visual equivalents to Coleman's convention-defying sounds

Monks –

This film by Lucie Palacios and Dietmar Post tells the strange tale of the Monks – a 60s beat band made up of former US GIs stationed in Germany. In their day The Monks were popular only in their adopted home, but since their tough, minimal proto-punk has profoundly influenced musicians as diverse as Faust, The Fall and Alec Empire

realeyz

films like you.

good ideas that a little unpacking might not be such a bad thing.

Ron Mael's compositions stick closely to a lush, pop-classical format, with occasional dips into electronica ("1956 Cannes Film Festival") rock ("Mr Bergman, How Are You?") and minimalism ("Oh My God"). Sadly, brother Russell – one of rock's great unsung voices – only appears prominently on a couple of tunes, with the vocals mainly handled by a full cast including Swedish chanteuse Saskia Husberg and, oddly, broadcaster and journalist Katie Puckrick. But the marriage of music and lyrics is flawless, indicating that for all the challenges offered by this commission, few outfits are better equipped to make this kind of transition.

Joseph Stannard

Steppos' Delight 2

Various

Soul Jazz 2×CD/3×LP

While dubstep's mainstream collapses further into beery 'wobble' tracks – a kind of New Metal take on rave – pretty much all the interesting work is being done on the outskirts. Soul Jazz's second *Steppos' Delight* compilation brings together two discs of this fringe activity, drawing on the back catalogues of some of dubstep's most forward-thinking labels, such as Hessle, Hemlock, Hyperdub and Kapsize.

The collection ranges so widely that it can seem unsettled, even bewildering, as it skips between misty two-step memory traces (as on Pangaea's "Router"), the stalking electro momentum of 01's "Dingy Boingy" and the extravagantly colourful G-funk-inspired bleep poems of Gemmy and Joker. The previous *Steppos' Delight* compilation gestured towards a blurring of the boundaries between Minimal Techno and dubstep, and this thread continues, as on Untold's "You Didn't Win The Holiday", where gulping bass tones are lit by flickering Akufen-esque cut-ups. But the big new story here is the assimilation of UK Funky's clattering rhythms into dubstep. Indeed, Funky's biggest producers Crazy Cousinz are included here; their "Inflation" ripples along on a xylophone melody with the unashamed drama of a Carl Craig production. Elsewhere, Funky's dense matrices of rhythm are streamlined into something approaching peak-time Techno, as on Mertyn's remix of Shed, and bubble up from the floor to destabilise Brackles's Acidic "Get A Job".

Ultimately, *Steppos' Delight* presents dubstep's fringes as being in pretty much the most exciting place a scene can be: one not defined by a unified sound, but rather by the clubs which play this music and the group of people who dance to it.

Simon Hempson

This Immortal Coil

The Dark Age Of Love

Ici D'Ailleurs CD

"I didn't want another compilation that would pile up pieces without any link," writes Stephane Gregoire, the head of the Ici D'Ailleurs record label, of this collection of Coil covers. "My wish was to transpose this unique musical mood to another one, more classical and more accessible to everyone."

The Dark Age Of Love certainly doesn't offer the unappetising ragbag of disconnected chancers that one wearily comes to expect from 'tribute' records. Gregoire's inspiration was the 4AD ensemble project This Mortal Coil, and it is clear that the album was conceived of as a coherent whole, in which all the performers – including Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, Matt Elliott, Yann Tiersen, Yeâl Naim – worked together to explore a single approach to Coil's songs: subdued, sepulchral, predominantly acoustic. But if you're perturbed by Gregoire's promise to make Coil's music "more accessible to everyone", you're right to be. The transposition of Peter Christopherson's electronics into 'proper' instruments (piano, double bass, cello), the replacement of Jhonn Balance with a disciplined singer like Nemo can only be a conservative move.

What's lost is the *wrongness* – the queerness – that made Coil's version of the numinous more than just another example of 'beautiful music'. Balance's lyrics are the only things left to trouble the cloying sense of tastefulness which dominates here, mostly: this record feels like background music for a hipster cafe or worse. Indeed, when I was playing This Immortal Coil's version of "Cardinal Points", my wife asked me why I was listening to something that resembled the theme tune to ITV's rural-kitsch detective series *Midsomer Murders*.

Mark Fisher

Unica Zürn

Temporal Bends

uZu Music CD

Even if David Knight and Stephen Thrower had not previously worked together, laying down drones and feedback as part of the ever-changing Amal Gamal Ensemble's rhythm-free excursions into sound, their past associations might have pointed towards a collaborative venture like *Temporal Bends*. Thrower supplied woodwind on early Coil releases and operatas as one half of Cyclobe, when not polishing off definitive studies on Italian horror films. Meanwhile, David Knight has played some primmelling guitar for Shock Headed Peters and watched Lydia Lunch's back on a number of occasions, in addition to recording his own set of elegant time based meditations as Arkkon. Given the duo's collective history, the quality of these recordings, made over the past five years or so, comes as no great shock.

Knight and Thrower bring a deep intuition to the performances, allowing treated guitar, saxophone and clarinet to blend with analogue synthesizers, mellotron and organ. The duo name Unica Zürn references an artist/writer who killed herself by leaping out of a window; the project title suggests some kind of distorted physiology brought about by too rapid an ascent from lower, denser levels up to a much higher one. To survive such an experience means slowing everything down to some smoother, less hurried pace. Only occasionally does a locked snippet of sound repeat itself enough to suggest anything like an insistent beat, otherwise the tempo is kept low and slow, minimalist waves of sustained notes surge gently back and forth.

Treated reeds, guitar feedback and sustained keyboards provide the core for both "The Temporal Bends", a four-part tidal cycle stretched over 25 minutes, and the shorter "Six Fabulous Mutilations", which writhes around, offering new facets and perspectives as it unfolds. The occasional interruption from recognisable sources, such as the stab and ripple of a piano on "Nautilus", a burst of shortwave radio signal or guest singer Danielle Dax's fractured vocals on closing track "Jack Sorrow", only serve to make the enigmatic effect more challenging still. So take a deep breath and dive straight for the bottom.

Ken Hollings

Walter & Sabrina

Two Tales: The Twilight Of Wolter & Sabrina

Danny Dark CD+Pbk

According to the sleevenotes, this is the final release from the duo of multi-instrumentalist Walter Cerdew – son of the late composer Cornelius – and artist Stephen Moore, aka Sabrina. Moore's working identity – chosen because it's the most common name found on call girls' cards left in London phone boxes – says a lot about the universe they've conjured since their collaborative debut, 1994's *Walter & Sabrina Play Pop, Walter & Sabrina Play Classical*. It's a seedy underworld of prostitutes, degradation, unlikely encounters and prodigious sexual organs – like a 1950s Soho, imagined by Jean Genet and projected into an alternate present day where people still call each other *"mucky blighters"*.

This vision is mediated through operatic sung-spoken vocals, performed by male sopranos and countertenors whose androgynous delivery adds an element of gender ambiguity, while the accompaniment for the two titular tales here brings the Walter & Sabrina project full circle. "Walter & Sabrina Play Classical: Tale One" is austere piano, "... Play Pop, Tale Two" is a synthetic concoction of guitar, saxophones and electronic beats. The two halves are separated by an instrumental that jumps from brittle and unappealing synthesizer to avant garde piano clusters to jaunty bop saxophone without much guiding logic. In fact, there's so little substance to the music that attention is inevitably thrown onto the libretto. That's where the project really comes unstuck.

Beginning as a meditation on the phallic properties of the cucumber and moving into a messy exegesis on copulation, the authors are no doubt striving to be transgressive. That it fails so spectacularly is largely due to awkward, pseudo-poetic lyrics, soggy with choice gobbets such as *"So soon the oyster of love become a cackle of lust as The Female Genitalia 'pon female genitalia pumped the suck, flexing muscles keeping firm upon the Mickey Taking's Mole Dong Thing."* The only thing remotely shocking about this limply prurient art titillation is that grown men should devote so much energy to creating something so tiresomely devoid of charm.

Daniel Spicer

The Boomerang

New reissues rated on the re sound

Screw magazine s tenth anniversary party at Plate s Retreat New York City 1975

Four new collections of disco classics and obscurities recall the last time that the bea took control

By Ian Penman

Various

Disco Discharge Classic Disco
Harmless 2×CD

Disco Discharge Disco Ladies
Harmless 2×CD

Disco Discharge Gay Disco & Hi NRG
Harmless 2×CD

Disco Discharge Euro Disco
Harmless 2×CD

Was this the last time of transgression and ecstasy? The last real time, before so many things interrupted the dream? Was this the last dance? Are we still hearing its echoes – and is that all they are now echoes?

It is 1979 maybe or 1980 At the end of a long corridor or mineshaft, you can hear the distant and muffled BMP BMP BMP Like that scene in *American Gigalo* where the camera-dancer pauses on the threshold just before plunging into uproar and hallucination (Dante re-imagined by Tom of Finland) falling into the dance as into a reservoir of electric energy all set to the vertical-take-off amyl sound of Cheryl Barnes's dizzying "Love And Passion" (music and lyrics Paul Schrader/Giorgio Moroder) You cease being *this* person *this* race *this* sex or sexuality and plunge sacrificially into this zone of mirror and heartbeat and chemical aroma The music is sonic time stretched like bubblegum on a rollerskater s lips This music is not up on a stage somewhere preening or sullen or detached – this music is IN you turns you on like a lover, shoots through you like a drug Sometimes you wonder that these underground convergences are even allowed Will the future be like this music – all speed and disappearance and dizzying stop-go change? Sometimes you think all music after this will be a disappointment, mere aftermath Sometimes you think you prefar walls to stay up, not come down – walls thet maintain and make luxurious this music's streamlined embrace, its smooth space of melancholy Here, even heartbreak feels like sublime forgiveness the sweetest release Go bang go *bang*

What do they sound like 30 years on the echoes? This is what compilations are, now a retrospective math History with the nightlife and social friction and utopian dreaming wiped away Everything listed ticked tidied up OK then *Disco Discharge* Great sleeves so-so sleevenotes (too many exclamation marks always a bad sign) Each of the four sets has a handful of heart-stoppingly brilliant tracks but also a lot that is a certain kind of samey All things considered, one donble or triple CD set would work just as well, or better It s an eternal dance music paradox – guaranteed floor fillers may not be the most 'interesting' to listen to In other surroundings may in fact sound functional, anonymous dully repetitive There was a moment in the middle of the first disc of *Gay Disco* where I almost dozed off now that *can t* be right That's decidedly not how I remember it – even allowing for the difference in chemical intake across the years There s maybe a few too many of these extended workouts like Macho s "I'm A Man" which are a bit boilerplate 1970s jazz funk Beautiful Bend's "That s The Meaning/Boogie Motion" might have sounded blissful played LOUD on a great system in a packed New York loft in 1979, but in 2009 In my front room it's just *nice*, and not 13 minutes nice

A general avoidance of extremes comes at the expense of some obvious omissions – nothing from the pioneering Salsoul label nothing from the later, but equally pioneering West End label (Peech Boys "Don t Make Me Weit"?) and nothing even vaguely electro (one of the great early Arthur Baker productions Depeche Mode?). Chic and Moroder are both well represented – and sound fresher than a Dow Jones come down – but a lot of the more risky/shadowy Innovators are absent A few shots of flair (Detroit futurism? Arthur Russell? Rinder & Lewis? Patrick Cowley?) wouldn t have gone amiss especially on the second *Euro Disco* CD which misfires badly interestingly things only start to sound wrong, clunky, *dated*, the nearer in time we get to now there is a passage on that second *Euro Disco* CD – Eighth Wonder (Minnie Mouse) Propaganda (bombastic) Fun Fun ('scretch' mix oh God no) which is just lame a waste

But there is alao all the stuff that not only hasn t dated but could be released tomorrow and still sound ahead of its game In the current pop climate of La Roux, Lady Gaga and Calvin Harris, a lot of it makes a whole new kind of sense There is a great passage on the first *Euro* CD – four tracks In a row (Space Moroder, Sylvia Love Sparks) that glisten with inventiveness synthesizer ontreach Dr Buzzard s Original Sevannah Band stagger in with the offhand, multi-hued production on "Cherchez La Femme", this clingy polyphony of veils layers, shadings that Stony Browder and August Darnell bring to bear on a track that also has a *very* timely sting in its tale *"Now he s working two jobs/Tired of living in debt* ..." Fern Kinney s "Groove Me" conjures up both Stax and Basic Channel in its mix of synth pulse, feathery trill and carnal invite Chic s production on Sheila B Devotion s "Spacer" interrupts its dubby dance billow with a scorching gu tar solo – years before *Thriller* On Suzi Lane s "Harmony", Moroder takes what is essentially a gospel track and renders it jaggedly futuristic, a blissful cocaine jacitation Rose Laurens's vocal on "American Dream" makes profane love sound like the most sacred choice in a small-minded, unforgiving world Boys Town Gang s 13 minute aural playlet "Cruisin' The Streets" simply has to be heard to be believed.

Does disco still need defending ? Maybe not But it s notable that the kind of interest and approval that accrues to a figure like Arthur Russell is still more the exception than the rule As if a lot of critics can only cope with the sheer outsize WASH of disco by clinging to the wreckage of some kind of desiccated AUTEUR wish Russell was a little bit nerdy angsty a proper musician after all Don't get me wrong – I love his music, too But still – you can t quite imagine the same papers and conferences for Walter Gibbons say or even Moroder (Which is, I guess, a mixed blessing) They were unarguably WAY ahead Disco was both a social space (a series of spaces) and a sonic space, in which wondrous things were accomplished If at the very least you credit disco with powers of transformative alchemy, then all the proof you d ever need is here any list of the highlights would have to include – with absolutely no irony intended – tracks by the follow ng Janis Ian Johnny Mathis The Glitter Band

There's a lot to be said about why rock critics were *quite* so wrong about (and uncomfortable with) disco – thet will have to wait Disco was just TOO MUCH The sex and drugs were too much The social mixing was too much The mix-up of hierarchy – both social and sonic – was too much Disco was an ABYSS of sound – but one with a heartbeat Let Sparks have the last word *"Loud as a crowd, or soft as a doubt/Lyrically weak but the music's the thing "* □

Allan Tannenbaum

Avant Rock

By Nick Richardson

Blue Sabbath Black Cheer
Dead Death Death Dead
Gnarled Forest LP

By several streaks, the heaviest record this month is this scowling slab of evil from Blue Sabbath Black Cheer. The Seattle duo of Stan Reed and Wm Rage are still widely referred to as a Doom group, but their sound has been crushed and mangled nearly to the point of absolute white-out. Sonically, they have more in common with the pugnacious power electronics of Grunt or Slogun than, say, Corrupted. They've retained Doom's longform immersion tactics, though – *Dead Death Death Dead* plays like the slow motion roar of a pissed-off lion, a cavernously resonent growl, timestretched over two sides of vinyl. This is misanthropic sound design at its best. Is it rock? Well, insofar as rock is the concentrated essence of adolescent frustration, yes.

Dirty Pool
Dirty Pool
UltraMarine LP

Recorded back in 2005 by two young cosmonauts, Chris Forsyth of Peeesseye and Shawn Edward Hansen of Phantom Limb, one half of this LP has aged well. The A side is a side-long duet entitled "I First Saw You", which finds Forsyth's guitar navigating the mellowy warmth of Hansen's Fender drones with a brain-baked take on the blues not a million miles away from Matt Valentine's Innar ragas. The unmodulated, almost churchy purity of the organ creates a sense of incredible stillness – the name Dirty Pool is misleading, "I First Saw You" is a long dip in crystal waters. Skip the flip though, with its pair of tedious loop-pedal constructions, bars of dovetailed riff to which Forsyth and Hansen gradually add layers – 1970s Reich on a serious shoestring.

Do Make Say Think
Other Truths
Kranky CD

In the lo-fi-fetishising, hypnagogic pop climate, where so much new music comes holed by memory or distorted by tape fuzz, the strong lines and rigorous architecture of the post-/math rock axis hold strong appeal. Unfortunately, the latest album from these Canadian veterans of the form shows again why it's so rarely a success. It's primarily a structural problem – there's too much padding, too many chunks of music that feel unimplied by the logic of what's gone before, but too prosaic to surprise. Post-rock groups often seem to want their songs to be long just for length's sake. I think because secretly they don't want to be rock groups at all, they want to be string quartets, and if their songs weren't long they wouldn't count as 'proper pieces'. Silly really, because when they're focused, Do Make Say Think are undeniably seductive. As in the opening minutes of "Do", a luminous piece of polyphonic weave and effortlessly adept ensemble playing.

Greymouth
West Coast Rip
Binary Datum CD

Hi-octane entropic punk from rumbustious New Zealanders Mark Sadgrove, a well-respected research physicist, and Mark Anderson. Drum kits tumble downstairs, guitars jab and pierce, while some loon gibbers amidships – these are gleeful lo-fi vibes in the Harry Pussy tradition. As with so much of this kind of thing – there's no shortage of it around at the moment either – *West Coast Rip* could be about the musical impossibility of absolute chaos. Greymouth flail against metre and melody but somehow constellation-like form and momentum emerge from the scatter of notes. An entity of fur, blood and nails, confused but integrated. The physics community should take note.

Kenneth Higney
American Dirt
Kabiutney CD

Kenneth Higney's 1976 album *Attic Demonstration* is a classic outsider statement – a wrecked, discordant take on Country rock, half-Gram Parsons, half-Jandek. 37 years later, here's its successor, a far tighter project. Higney's new ensemble, an efficient bunch of Tennessee sessionistas, is impeccably together – which deprives the music of some of its prior collapsible charm. Still, weirdness is preserved. There are oddball angular shifts in harmony, phrases that ride over or fall short of anticipated line lengths, even sly postmodern allusion (opener "Nothing Will Change" quotes The Beatles' "Don't Let Me Down").

Hush Arbors
Yankee Reality
Ecstatic Peace CD

Everything's been notched up a couple of increments since last year's Hush Arbors album. There's less acoustic guitar now, more electric, more tracks on the vocals, more beef on the drums. The group's jangle sounds less like The Byrds and more like early REM, as reimagined by a band of lonesome cowboys. Problem is, *Yankee Reality* fails to recapture the artful melodicism of its predecessor. It can be rhythmically compelling – the hoedowns "Lisbon" and "Coming Home" are so infectious they almost succeed in blinding you to their tunelessness – but mostly *Yankee Reality* just sits stubbornly in the background, reminding you of better music.

Shrinebuilder
Shrinebuilder
Neurot CD/2×LP

Shrinebuilder are an all-star stoner/Doom hook-up – Saint Vitus's Scott Weinrich and Scott Kelly from Neurosis on guitar, QM's Al Cisneros on bass, and Melvins' Dale Crover on drums. Given the pedigree and the way these kinds of collaborations have panned out in the past, I was expecting a monolithic, riff-as-natural-disaster drone Metal epic. But no: letting their hair down (even further) away from their respective day groups, Shrinebuilder opt more for classic space-rock territory. They certainly don't come close to the kind of bone-crushing weight of the Blue Sabbath release, nor do they intend to. The riffs are killer, inevitably, but they're governed by song form as opposed to any lofty impulse to abstraction. And the vocals, handled by all four group members, can get pretty croonsome – as on "Blind For All To See", where Kelly does his best latterday Michael Gira impression. Add extended guitar solos and spurious mysticism, and you get an appealing piece of guilty pleasure kinda Metallica play *Space Ritual*.

Steven R Smith
Cities
Immune LP

Cities marks a stylistic break for Jewelled Antler man Steven R Smith. 2007's *Owl* on Digitelis was recorded in mono, featured mostly guitar and voice and was resolutely pastoral. *Cities*, as befits the change of subject, is a more cultivated affair – the orchestration and mixdown are lusher, accordions, double bass, piano, drums and guitar meshed democratically together in a series of pretty vignettes, and Smith's voice appears but rarely. "Black Paper Scrim" is particularly convincing, a sombre ballad that swathes its world-weary guitar and bass lumber in haunted melodica and swirling drones, coming close, in mood, to a Bohren-style funeral jazz. The closest reference points are Machinefabriek's chamber music releases – here, as there, the music is richly evocative and elegantly written, but unimposing. *Cities* isn't an event, it's a melancholic watercolour backdrop against which to live out a sensitive half hour.

Stellar Om Source
Rise In Planes
Black Dirt LP

Beautiful neo-Kosmische from Dutch underground mover Stellar Om Source aka Christelle Gualdi, about whom there's been a buzz recently – largely thanks to her collaborations with such big name arena-fillers as The Skatars and Ashtray Navigations. The A side of *Rise In Planes* describes the evolution of a melodic line as it emerges shyly from a bass drone, delicately spreads its wings, and soars off into space. It's hard to put your finger on precisely what makes this synth meditation so affecting. Partly it's the instability of the pitch, which Gualdi keeps gently wavering, giving her instrument a fragile creature warmth, so that when she glides to the high notes and opens up her filters, it feels like a nightingale deity is singing just for you. On the B side she plays out a similar strategy, but slower, over a metronomic two-beat provided by No-Neck Blues Band drummer Dave Nuss – a reconciliation of the cosmic and motorik. □

Critical Beats

By Philip Sherburne

Basic Soul Unit/Lerosa
Panorama Bar 02 Part I
Ostgut-Ton 12"/Download

Steffi/Levon Vincent
Panorama Bar 02 Part II
Ostgut-Ton 12"/Download

If Tama Sumo's *Panorama Bar 02* mix CD occasionally smacks of missed opportunities, we can be grateful for these previously unreleased cuts and, in the case of Lerosa's and Steffi's tracks, produced expressly for the mix. Basic Soul Unit's "Things Pass" isn't just a highly effective jack track. It's also unusually emotionally conflicted, with bright, almost unnervingly perky arpeggios gradually swallowed up by more pensive counterpoints. Steffi's "24 Hours" is an easygoing House number in a Dial/Smallville vein, its dainty, stepping bass and pastel colouring are a world away from Levon Vincent's "Late Night Jam", an urgent, dubby, reduced House track that kicks against its constraints in great sheets of white noise. The best of the lot is Lerosa's "Plesso". Darker and tougher than his usual work, it balances bare-bones drum machines and bass staccato with minor key countermelodies and martial snares. It's grim and sweet in equal measure.

Claro Intelecto
Chadderton EP
Modern Love 12"

Despite what the sleeve might suggest, not much light seeps into Claro Intelecto's music. Like his Modern Love colleagues Andy Stott and MLZ, Claro Intelecto – Manchester's Mark Stewart – favours murky atmospheres where sluggish bass lines struggle to push free from dub delay and static-encrusted drum machines. Still, it's never suffocating. "Chatterton", named for a mill town located upon the River Irk in Greater Manchester, leavens its traces of industrial decay with swiftly flowing chords and a snapping, curling bassline as fat as an eel. "Above" is even sprightlier, its chords tuned one major interval higher and its delay chain faster and shorter, while tambourine and handclaps egg it gently along. Then, with no warning, a threshold is crossed, and the track funnels away in a two-minute denouement, setting the stage for "Great Day", a short, melodic synthesizer sketch that feels as natural as breathing.

Darkstar
Aidy's Girl Is A Computer
Hyperdub 12"/Download

Whatever you thought Hyperdub was, it probably wasn't this. The fizzy, frayed synth tones of Darkstar's earlier releases are still here, but all traces of dubstep or even Bass music – wobbling bass, fidgety rhythms, you name it – are gone. The title track, composed of buzzy sawtooth synth lead, plinking wooden percussion and gently treated vocals, still swings, but more like a 1960s girl group. Both the chord progression and the melody actually sound

Dub

By Steve Barker

a lot like "Crimewave" by 8-bit pop stars Crystal Castles though there's a hit and a strangeness here, too. On the flip, Detroit's Kyle Hall lays into a slow House groove adding an atmospheric overlay of vox and keys lifted from the original - a pitchbent G-funk lead catapults it out of the ordinary.

Jimmy Edgar
Funktion
Minus 12"/Download
Warp and Minus might seem to have little in common, past an early 1990s agreement between Warp and Richie Hawtin's previous label Plus 8, which saw them sharing artists like Plastikman and Speedy J across the Atlantic. But here comes former Warp signee Jimmy Edgar, drizzling Acidic R&B squelch over Minus's parched, post-mmml landscape "Young Thing" and "Funktion Acid Version" are both spare, snappy Acid cuts recalling Minus's roots in Plus-8. But "Funktion Instrumental" is more surprising. Its lush, augmented chords resemble Metro Area's electro disco, while chirpy background oscillations hark back to the advanced Acid Thomas Melchior and Tim Hutton made in the early 1990s as Yonl. Complemented with a Seth Troxler remix that pairs sparse machine rhythms with great gobs of Prince-like funk chords, it's a welcome splash of colour for a label more accustomed to grey areas.

Robert Hood
Resurrection/Obey
Mi-Plant 12"/Download
Superman/Range
Mi-Plant 12"/Download
Many electronic musicians go to great lengths to 'humanise' their music painstakingly adding expressive effects to digitally executed sequences or, ironically, using pre-programmed algorithms to do the same. Robert Hood takes the opposite approach, constantly reminding you that his music comes from machines. On "Resurrection", a machine shaker blasts away in rigid, uninflected 16th notes, as if to say: "No callouses were formed in the creation of this pattern." The same trick gives "Superman" its desperate, ungainly quality: as racing hi-hats seem to stumble over themselves in a manic, machinic onslaught. Likewise, on "Range", when a ping-ing ride cymbal slowly undulates in pitch, it draws your attention to the pot being twisted and the imitative limits of the sample itself. Yet both "Range" and "Superman" draw half their power from the grace and finesse with which filters curl around their chords. The other half comes from its controlled bursts of energy: syncopated handclaps volleying back and forth.

LCD Soundsystem
45:33 Remixes
DFA CD/Download
LCD Soundsystem's *45:33*, a 2006 promotional tie-in for Nike, could have been a footnote to James Murphy's career

Robert Hood

– 45 minutes of workout filler for a bit of corporate lucre. Instead, he turned in a generous, four-part funk/disco suite as oddly compelling as anything he'd done to date. Those sessions haven't stopped giving, yielding "Someone Great", one of *Sound Of Silver*'s best songs, and now serve as the source material for a bounty of remixes. A few, like Runaway's spongy dubby House track, bear little to no similarity with anything on the original album, but that's no slight – Pilooski's cheerfully deranged lark is a case in point, with a vocodered refrain (*"Do you like something French?"*) underscoring his irreverent approach. Theo Parrish's heel-dragging, lopsided funk rework of part three is a clear highlight, dropping the vocal chorus – shades of New Sector Movements – over grinding, slow-mo House with a rehearsal room feel. DFA cohort Prince Language is most faithful to the original material: his version is an effective disco edit of the opening vocal cut. But Prins Thomas offers the set's most ambitious reworking, collaging together elements from seemingly the entire original album into a chugging, polyrhythmic 13 minute epic that feels more like, well, 45'33".

Daniel Meteo
In The Mood For Love
Meteosound 12"/Download
Daniel Meteo's new album *Working Class* is tougher and more immediate than much of his previous music. Some of the dubby aura has dissipated, and his rhythms, made using what sounds like a combination of drum machines and drum kit samples, are forceful and single-minded. But they still sound like curios, veiling their materials and shifting up the palette with every new track. "In The Mood For Love" is actually one of the album's most straightforward tracks, given its measured stomp and arpeggiated jitter, but there's an odd, muted, almost lo-fi quality to it, and Meteo's own slurred voiceover only heightens its distant quality. Abe Duque's remix is a dark, throbbing bell of Techno kitted out in heavy Latin rhythms. Mantasm bass and noisy outbursts. Just when you think it's simmered down, something else explodes.

St Plomb
Escape Run
Brutl 12"/Download
The punchy, syncopated chord stabs of classic House have become ubiquitous recently. An easy signifier for 'depth' and they're just as easy to play (or program), many synthesizers come with an array of jazzy chords loaded into the preset banks. Switzerland's St Plomb uses them too, but on his "Escape Run" he's skilful enough to keep them stumbling – rushing the beat, tripping up the scale, scrapping with their multitracked clones. Between those blotchy, irrepressible keys and a keen sense of when to shift up the flow, it's anything but obvious. "Saturn's Night Access", likewise, understands that 'deep' is deeper than bluesy affect.

Subaana
Solidify/Analysa
Planet Mu 12"/Download
Planet Mu takes a dubstep hiatus with this two-track single from London's Subeena. "Solidify", produced with Sa-Ra's Dan Mas Keith and featuring singer Jamie Woon, reimagines D'Angelo's silken soul in a soundscape of tightly wound glitch textures, dub pacing and airy, chiming synthesizers. Subeena's production largely sticks to the edges, letting Woon's multitracked harmonies fill the centre of the frame, and it sounds somehow earthy and ethereal all at once. The instrumental "Analyse" is even more affecting, as an easygoing electro skip gives rise to climbing strings and thickets of taut, pinging synthesizers. Every element is finely honed and incredibly precise, but it all masses together into an expansive, cloudlike form. Two thirds of the way through, the song shifts a half-step up in key. Instead of feeling gimmicky, the change throws a whole new light on things, turning a potentially cloying melody darker and more doubtful.

Van Rivars
Stretched Out On Pavement
SD 12"/Download
What sets workmanlike dub Techno apart from the stuff that makes you swoon? I have no idea how to quantify it, but Van Rivers seems to. "Stretched Out On Pavement" doesn't depart from formula – filtered chords, sharp-edged hi-hats and a two-note bassline – but it effortlessly sprints past the realm of the pedestrian. Rolling chords feel almost haphazard, struck off beat and tripping up and down the scale with no obvious pattern. A flute-like countermelody creates an additional sense of movement and randomised cowbell rattle brings things dangerously close to coming off the rails. Nuknbus (SD owner Jan Katsma) contributes a dark, worthy remix that accentuates clipped percussion and worried strings, but it doesn't come close to upstaging Van Rivers's original, which imbues by-numbers Techno with as much mystery and quiet drama as I've heard this year. □

Dubblestandart/Lee 'Scratch' Perry/Ari Up
Return From Planet Dub
Collision 2×CD
Although there can be no dispute over the credentials of Vienna's Dubblestandart, their 11th album is a meisterwerk weighing in at nearly two and a half hours that can only be aimed at those who have suspended all sense of time via artificial means. Admittedly it's a song and dub companion set, but the whole culture of reggae is about selection rather than saturation. Perry revisits a few of his old tunes: "Chesa The Devil" and "Blackboard Jungle", which he did better last year with Adrian Sherwood. Indeed the sound borders on a K-Tel version of Dub Syndicate at times. Perry himself is best when at his most restrained, as on "Give Thanks & Praisas (Magaton 3)", or when plainly daft, as on "I Foo China" with its dopey imagining of a cantopop refrain. Ari Up can't resist an appearance, to coincide with the resuscitation of The Slits – also produced by Sherwood. Pass.

Gussie P/Matic Horns
Gussie P Meets Black Solidarity/Delamare Avenue Skank
Sp A Cup 10"
After years as a session musician for a long roster of reggae musicians, master trombonist Henry 'Buttons' Tenyue finally released his debut album *400 Years* as part of Gussie P's vinyl-only showcase series, and also has another album out on Coptic Lion, *Increase The Peace*, for artist/producer Mike Brooks. Both sets have Buttons blowing in the jazz-to-reggae style of his forebears Don Drummond and Vin Gordon, with the Gussie alternative having the dubs on steppers and one drops laid by Mafia & Fluxy, Chris Lane and Gussie P himself. This EP takes the rhythm to Tristan Palmer's 1980 roots classic "Bad Boys" on a woozily seductive instrumental cut with a strange descending horn pattern creating a slurring slowing-down effect, the much tougher flip adapts "The Wicked Shall Fall", a track from the old Fashion label's A-Class team with Barry Boom on vocal, for a mid-paced driving steppers rescued by a brief snatch of an a cappella trombone isolated in the spongy dub mix.

King General
Broke Again
Conscious Sounds 12"
Producer/engineer Dougie Wardop revives the career of another semi-forgotten reggae vocalist on this 12", a taster for the showcase CD also featuring the In Fashion nu roots vocalist Christine Miller. King General cut a few tunes in the 1990s for Conscious Sounds, notably "Gunman" and "Joker Smokin'", before vanishing into the South London interior. Apparently the rhythm here is derived from an obscure 1980s tune released on a US 12", "Sunny Gats Blue", sourced from a Johnny Mathis song, but

vamped up into a sound system 'burial' tune. It's a jump-up tune with a 'back to the 80s', no-money lyrical theme, but as usual on Conscious Sounds it's best to proceed directly to the dubs, where the real goods are found. Dougie gives a straight read of "Pocket Empty Dub", but a more FX-laden dubplate cut for "Money Done Dub". Idren Reality has two tunes and five cuts on the flip, one in collaboration with The Dubateers.

King General (far right) with the Bush Chemists

Phil Pratt
Star Wars Volume 2
Pratt Music CD
This is a real curiosity. Phil Pratt is best known as a producer of quality cultured reggae, mostly released on his Sunshot label with recognised artists like Dennis Brown, Max Romeo, Ken Boothe, John Holt and Pat Kelly, and famously engineered Burning Spear's *Marcus Garvey* album. He's not been too evident in the reissue market – Pressure Sounds dabbled with their collection *Phil Prott Thing*: there's been a couple of poorly distributed albums of revives and a smattering of 7" re-presses. The only album credited to his name was the 1978 roots dub album *Star Wars*, released on Burning Sounds but this apparent follow-up sounds pure mid-1990s. With its layered tablas, the opening title track could have come directly from Sly & Robbie's Latin album from around ten years ago, whereas the following "Bim Dub" is the lowest form of Montego Bay resort disco. "Pumpin Dub" has a rhythm loop straight out of The JBs textbook, but if you ever needed a dub version of Middle Of The Road's "Chirpy Chirpy Cheep Cheep" then it's here as "Dub Addic" (sic). To complete the experience, the last track on the CD is missing. Bizarre.

The Revolutionaries
Top Ranking Dub
Duke Reid CD
An original Jamaican press of this 1978 album on Rootsman sold for $100 on eBay earlier this year. The dubs were mixed by Crucial Bunny at Channel One and the tunes seem to fall under the provenance of the estate of the late Duke Reid. Sly & Robbie are in attendance, as are Deadly Headly and Cedric 'Im' Brooks on horns, so there's no slouching on the session takes. "Screw Face Dub" is a rework of Winston Heywood & The Hombres' great "Bam Sa Bo" from 1972 on the Jaguar label. "Earthquake Dub" is the mega-versioned "Let Me Tell You Boy" by Harry Mudie, while "Blockade Dub" is a great slowed-down version of Elvis's "Suspicious Minds". Lifted directly from vinyl, crackles and pops run through the album.

Rico
Ghetto Rockers (Woreiko Dub)
Island LP
Last appearing five years ago on CD in Japan, this is a US prerelease-style vinyl-only pressing, in plain white cardboard sleeve stamped with the titles, of the stupidly rare dub companion to Rico Rodriguez's 1978 *Man From Woreiko* instrumental album. Recorded at Joe Gibbs and Randy's in 1976 but mixed in the UK at Island's Basing Street Studios by Karl Pitterson and Rico's partner, cornet player Dick Cuthell, the original album was a redefintion of Jamaica jazz for the roots era. The standout "Africa" was originally recorded in London as a demo to demonstrate the range of Rico's compositional ability, but the dub becomes a slow groove into forever, adorned by flute, wah, weh and deeply rasping synth keys, with reverbed backing harmonies of I Jahman Levi and Candi McKenzie. The rest of the album has high quality roots outings, with most of the musicians either straight from nyabinghi workouts in the hills of Clerendon or from sessions in Kingston.

Riddim Conference
Hail Hm Discomix/Struggle Discomix
Tokyo Connexion 12"
Riddim Conference aka Nobuhiro Suzuki is a Japanese dubster from Tokyo and the original bass player from reggae band Cultivator. Exploring UK modes of meditative Shaka steppers or a mid-paced processional, King David's style, Suzuki mixes live instruments and programming. Tokyo Connexion is a spin-off from the French label Kingston Connection, where the track "Struggle" appeared on a 7". Now sold out, the tune is reprised in sprawling extended form on this white vinyl d-scomix.

Saddast & Pala Ridar
Wont To Go To Zion
Cassava Outernational 12"
The tie-dyed coloured vinyl and heavyweight brown card sleeves show the attention that goes into Cassava Outernational releases, and the music matches up. This third set from Nashville based dubster Craig Allen moves his sound forward from classic roots into a 1960s Pablo digital style. Singjay Saddest arrives from Trinidad via Brooklyn's Silver Star sound system, but his off-centre delivery on "Look Youth Man" takes some getting used to, so when the version "Dubbing Youth Men" arrives with its deep dipping bass and hissing looped percussion, it's like a rescue job by The Pale Rider. The flip proves the point as the bass is taken down to the level of a vibrational throb, countered by the phased delay swathed around the melodica lines.

Soul Syndicate
Ghetto-Ology Dub Wise
Black Roots LP
1979's *Ghetto-Ology* was perhaps Sugar Minott's finest self-produced moment. It was reissued on CD together with its dub companion by Easy Star in 2000 as *Dub Wise*, it is now back on vinyl at last. Cut soon after he left Studio One, recorded at Channel One and voiced and mixed at King Tubby's by Prince Jammy, the set went a long way to establishing Minott's Black Roots label and the community based Youth Promotion collective. The dubs are a fairly straight reading with not much embellishment beyond the drops, delays and reverbs, but nevertheless it's a must-have album for fans of the vocal set. Sugar's "Ghetto-Ology" title track is a yard-style reworking of Sam Cooke's "Wonderful World" lyrics, and the vocal, one of the highlights of roots reggae, is tracked here, albeit on the dub mix.

Jah Wobble
Get Carter/Get Carter Version (Cliff Brumby Mix)
Pressure Sounds 10"
A debut release from Jah Wobble guesting for Pressure Sounds, as the label spreads its wings beyond roots, with this strictly modern take on the theme of Mike Hodges's Brit noir classic, written by jazz pianist Roy Budd. The chill melancholy of the original is retained, with the whooshing intro of passing trains and tablas joined by Wobble on keys, then Sylvia Hallett on bowed serengi, before *The Wire*'s Improv co-conspirator Clive Bell arrives on flute. In absolute contrast to the film score, Wobble builds a sprawling, monstrous bassline that crawls in and out of the mix, occasionally dropping out like a dubplate. The flip features the Cliff Brumby mix, a character from the original film rather than a co-opted UK Funky DJ. □

Abreaktor
Any Day Now And
Brigade Music CD/Download
Alex O gave up making music more than a decade ago. He had dabbled in everything from jazz to Gabba without ever really feeling like he'd found his voice, and eventually real life took over. But in 2005 he discovered what ten years of development had done to the power of sequencing software and the flexibility of digital synthesis, and found himself back in the virtual studio with a renewed sense of purpose – and this five track EP showcases a distinctive soundworld. Abreaktor is the sound of a man entirely divorced from any specific scene (he lists his influences as Bill Evans, Ozzy Osbourne, Richard D James and Pol Pot), making tough, resonant music of his own. "Terce" welds some truly subterranean bass frequencies to sheets of white noise, softening the impact with orphaned, Technoid bleeps, while "Ercet" threads writhing patterns through vast choral caverns. Potent stuff.

Aufgang
Aufgang
Infine CD/LP/Download
The odds are that you've never heard anything quite like this before. Whether or not you *want* to hear it is another matter, of course. The conventional part of Francesco Tristano's career has revolved around recordings of Berio and Bach and gala performances in the world's concert halls, in a similar fashion, Rami Khalife has explored Prokofiev and improvised jazz. But the two also share a genuine passion for clubbing, first sparked when they studied together at Juilliard in New York, and Aufgang is an attempt to reconcile their disparate passions. On first encounter, it feels like a hideous mistake, as the opening "Channel 7" combines the empty grandeur of high Romantic virtuosity with the tired platitudes of dance music, a kind of Liszt on 45. But things quickly get stranger and better – "Channel 9" moves fluidly between staccato modernist angles and deliberate breakbeats, while the relentless application of the sustain pedal transforms the jaded Italo-House tactics of "Sonar" into something sonorous and sinister.

Cindytalk
The Crackle Of My Soul
Editions Mego CD
Not so much a blast from the past as a heavily processed threnody, Gordon Sharp inaugurated Cindytalk back in 1982 as an artful, malleable refuge from the Scottish post-punk scene that he grew up in. Having survived a brief flirtation with popularity – when he provided vocals for This Mortal Coil's version of Big Star's "Kangaroo" – Sharp went on to lead Cindytalk through a series of increasingly experimental incarnations, which culminated in 1995's *Wappmschow*. Mego would seem to offer

Global

By Julian Cowley

the perfect context for the breaking of such a long-held silence, as *The Crackle Of My Soul* – oblique and melancholy, balancing fractured digitalia against keening chimes and cunningly deployed splashes of Noise – hints throughout at the influence of label founder Peter Rehberg. But a few, tantalising traces suggest the Cindytalk of the 1980s – "Our Shadow, Remembered" introduces a looped incantatory chant ("*come here, come here*"), while the ferocious distortion of "Transgender Warrior" is neatly framed by elliptical and strangely articulate rhythms.

Cold Cave
Love Comes Close
Matador CD/LP/Download

You might not describe Wesley Eisold as a reluctant musician exactly – he's done his time in various groups, including California hardcore heroes Some Girls – but this project is a surprising new twist in an illustrious career as a poet, zine writer, publisher and, via his Heartworm Imprint, general promulgator of underground culture. Cold Cave started out as a bedroom experiment in songwriting bolstered by rough layers of salvaged synthesizers, but it quickly gathered both polish and momentum. The title track of *Love Comes Close* reveals a considerable debt to Joy Division/New Order deadpan vocals interlocking with foursquare beats and lissom keyboards and various other shades from the same period – The Human League, Soft Cell, The Cure even Psychic TV – haunt the rest of the record. But whereas so many current groups focus on the kitsch appeal of the 1980s, Eisold's morbid lyrics successfully reanimate the decade's darker currents, making Cold Cave's far more substantial proposition.

Klimek
Movies Is Magic
Anticipate Recordings CD/Download

Sebastian Meissner's last record *Dedications* was a strikingly personal artistic gesture from a composer who has spent most of his career concealed behind a multiplicity of pseudonyms. And, as its literal, almost naive title suggests, *Movies Is Magic* is even more approachable: a lush, dynamic paean to another source of artistic inspiration – the soundtrack. The titles are like the scene headings from imaginary scripts ("True Enemies And False Friends", "For Whom The Bells Toll") and Meissner uses these phrases as portals into a series of distinctively elastic cinematic vignettes. All the familiar techniques of the film score are here – high, quivering strings, dramatic splashes of percussion, swooning melodic cadences, fraught silences – but these conventions are constantly subverted by unexpected juxtapositions. Tactically, it's like listening to a cut-up, but the transitions are so seamless it's the music's radiant eloquence, rather than its surreal logic, that makes the most lasting impression.

Mem1
+1
Interval Recordings CD

You tend to assume that you're venturing into the outer reaches of abstract experimentalism when artist names and album titles start to resemble lines of machine code. But while you wouldn't exactly describe Mem1's third CD as populist, it does demonstrate that rigorous methodology needn't always produce militant austerity. Mem1's recorded works can be characterised as a series of dialogues between the cello explorations of Laura Cetilla and the electronic manipulations of her husband Mark, and +1 opens up their conversation to a series of third parties. The music is unquestionably enriched as a result. Collaborators include Jan Jelinek and Erik Carlson (aka Area C), whose guitar creeps and probes with tremulous delicacy. But although the mood is largely meditative, there's no shortage of variety – Jeremy Drake's massed, layered scrapings and Frank Bretschneider's splintered pulse both add welcome measures of astringency.

DJ /rupture & Matt Shadetek
Solar Life Raft
The Agriculture CD/Download

This refreshingly wide-ranging mix CD conjures up a parallel universe, one where the seismic subsonic innovations of dubstep sprung not from suburban South London but from Brooklyn's artiest enclaves. /rupture and Shadetek's own productions show plenty of love for digital dancehall, revelling in jaunty Caribbean inflections, but they balance these warm, tropical notes with commendable doses of the unexpected. So amongst the sturdy beats can be found a quivery Ambient interlude courtesy of Finnish mavericks Paavoharju, the plangent glossolalia of Nico Muhly's "Mothertongue" an abrasive snatch of vintage Luc Ferrari, and dada poetry from Caroline Bergvall. Inessential, maybe, but thoroughly diverting.

Tu m'
Monochromes Vol 1
Line CD

The typically stark 12k artwork on this release carries a quote from Jean Cocteau: "A poet always has too many words in his vocabulary, a painter too many colours on his palette, a musician too many notes on his keyboard." That observation doesn't really apply to the Italian duo Tu m' whose *Monochrome* series – titled with synaesthetic accuracy – is profoundly minimal. The four tracks on this first volume are steady systolas and diastoles garlanded by flurries of static and wistful entropic motifs: as simple and organic as the rising and falling of breath. Tu m's work has a cumulative impact, acquiring emotional force as the slow-motion magic of repetition takes hold. It's as assured as it is self-effacing and, over so quietly, rather wonderful. □

Mulatu Astatke
NY-Addis-London: The Story Of Ethio Jazz 1965–1975
Strut CD/Download

Following last year's collaboration with London fusionists The Heliocentrics, this is a timely trip into the back catalogue of Ethiopian arranger Mulatu Astatke. A vibraphone and keyboard player, who studied music in the UK and USA, Astatke is credited with invention of Ethio Jazz, fusing Western musical ideas with modes and melodies from his homeland. That's well illustrated on this enjoyable, if at times bewildering compilation. The bewilderment stems from Astatke's willingness to embrace the disparities of jazz, resulting in a patchwork of styles and directions. As his ensembles play, you may hear shades of Lee Morgan, *Bitches Brew* or Sun Ra, eruptions of Latin or Caribbean rhythm, splashes of lounge froth. Seeping through these varied and provisional identities are voices and preferences from downtown Addis Ababa.

Ouled Bambera
Portraits Of Gnawa
Twos & Fews CD+DVD

The Gnawa are Moroccan music-trance practitioners who negotiate with spirits and reputedly shun outsiders. Yet when Caitlin McNally met venerable Gnawi Brahim Belkani in Marrakech, he revealed that he had played his guimbri – a deep thrumming three-stringed lute - with enthusiastic visitors including pianist Randy Weston, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page and Robert Plant. McNally's 35 minute film of Belkani and other Gnawa talking, playing, singing and communicating with spirits is gripping and not to be missed. The CD fills out the picture with 56 further minutes of this profoundly traditional, rhythmically insistent music. The patterns are long established, performance is ritualistic and the gnawri's potential for colonration is limited, but individual musicians can still sound immediate and inspired. A sense of connection with sub-Saharan ancestors, transported north as slaves, seeps through the intensity, past and present intersect in a timeless zone.

Egypt: Aicha Redouane Et L'Ensemble Al-Adwar
Various
Ocora/Radio France CD

Moroccan by birth and raised in France, singer Aicha Redouane has devotedly revived the all but lost waisa repertoire of Egyptian art music, which reached a peak of popularity a century ago. A suite of sinuous modal melodies performed with a chamber group of zither, violin, oud and frame drum, waisa is passionate and urbane, formally elegant with regular glimmers of fire. Redouane retrieved vocal techniques from 78 rpm discs, but her performances are vivid and dust-free, and her Paris based accompanying musicians clearly share her commitment to a living music. Listening to this CD may be more like visiting a finely cultivated garden than trekking through wild nature but the experience is still invigorating. A typical Ocora release, essentially – beautifully recorded and informatively documented, yet engaged with this stimulating music at the level of gut response as well as intellectual curiosity.

Franco & Le TPOK Jazz
Francophonic: Africa's Greatest – A Retrospective Vol 2
Sterns Music 2×CD

This irresistible compilation kicks off in 1980, the year that Congolese guitarist and singer Franco was declared a Grand Master of music in his native Zaire. Establishment status may have swayed the lyrical content of his songs from resistence to praise of the ruling clique, but musically he continued to work magic until illness overtook him towards the close of that decade. The signature sound of his Tout Puissant Orchestre Kinshasa (All Powerful Kinshasha Orchestra) was pulsating African rumba, light on percussion, anchored by firm bass, with brass and guitars performing an intricate sashay around Franco's pivotal glinting guitar phrases and appealingly direct vocals. There was some refinement of that over the years, but the buoyancy of his music was a constant and a delight. Along with *Francophonic Vol 1*, this forms an invaluable account of a true giant in African music.

Ustad Ali Ahmad Hussain Khan & Party
Serenity
Felmay CD

In Indian classical music the singing voice leads the way, instrumentalists aspire to match its emotional colour and versatility. In this case it's the nasal reedy tones of Ali Ahmad Hussain Khan's shenai that conjure mood from modes. The oboe-like shenai, which has two sets of double reeds, has sounded astringent and edgy in the hands of Ornette Coleman, shrill and precarious when blown by Captain Beefheart, but here as the title declares, this magisterial eastern Indian improvisor steers it toward serenity. Against a backdrop of tamburas, drone-box, hand drums and two supporting shenai, he draws surprising expressive depth and fluidity from his instrument. There's still a pinched quality to its tone, but his playing is so articulate and the ensemble sound is so well-balanced around its acidity that the overall impact is beatifically soothing. To draw another Western musician into the frame: fans of Terry Riley's influential raga tinged work should feel perfectly at home with *Serenity*.

Ghana Special: Modern Highlife Afro-Sounds & Ghanaian Blues 1968–81
Various
Soundway 2×CD

A compilation that unearths obscure and neglected material from a period when

Hiphop

By **Andrew Nosnitsky**

various exponents of Ghanaian highlife were drawing sustenance from imported rock and soul recordings. Now and then the works producing an energised hybrid with uncompromised playing. At the other end of the spectrum, the music is overburdened and uncharacteristically sluggish, at its worst reminiscent of the interminable stodginess of run of the mill rock jamming. The actual grafting can sound laboured as when The Barbecues negotiate Santana or Vis A Vis embark on an ill-judged synth excursion. It's good to hear Christy Azuma's extraordinary voice the understated affirmation of City Boys Band. Bokoor Band's quirky use of Oylanesque harmonica – but overall this is a hit and miss assortment.

Gözalo: Bugalu Tropical
Verious
Vamp seul CD
A third volume of enjoyably louche and slinky Peruvian grooves from the late 1960s. Strutting Nu Yorican boogaloo transleted into Lima's local accents, with strident brass, twangy guitars, extrovert percussion and a readiness to fling together available styles in order to make the tropical mix still more infectious. There's plenty of variety in approach, ranging from the Latin jazz sophisticetion of Al Valdez to the eir-punching cabaret chents of Los Girasoles and Merio Allison s rather routine contribution to the "Louie Louie" discography. Peru may still suggest an aure of the exotic for European listeners, but today this music seems more distant in time than in space: there are touches of proto-salsa krtsch that sound dated and grate a little, but nothing in this upbeat collection now seems notably remote.

Lalgudi Vijeyalakshmi/Mela Chendrashekar/Jaishree Jairaj
Vedhya Sunodha Pravohom
Felmay CD
Distiluguished Caruatic violinist Lalgudi Jayaraman conceived an ensemble where violin, flute and the lute-like veena could combine and sound together. On this thoroughly engaging release, his daughter Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi takes up the bow, Mala Chandrashekar blows sweet-toned flute and Jaishree Jairaj plucks the veene. The melodic fluency and lightness of their playing suggests birdsong; they call and respoud or move together with remerkable agility and shared understanding. The chatter of hand-drum and clay pot accompany their intricate interplay. It all sounds so easy and natural: a measure of the extent to which these musiclens heve internalised the considerable technical demends of their performauce. As is invariably the case with ludiau classical music, there is evident immersion in traditiou, but that tradition is open to improvisatory revisiou and regeneration, enabling these accomplished musicians to introduce fresh accents, vitality and charm. □

Big Boi featuring George Clinton & Too Short
For Your Sorrows
Jive Dewuload
While the world waits for Andre 3000 to come back down from Mars, his (former?) rhyme partner continues to quietly drop singles from his long delayed solo effort *Sir Lucious Leftfoot*. Like many classic OutKast records before it, "Sorrows" exceeds the sum of its parts. What starts as a simple and spiteful stoner battle rap slowly shifts into e political lement on Hurricane Ketrina as producers Organized Noize tiptoe between their classic space funk and glitchy Atlsnte bass. A George Clinton hook lends some euthenticity to this *"dope on dope"* perspective and Sir Too Short shows up to rap about Jesse Jackson for a few short bars (he also delivers a pair of well timed *"Blinlitch"* punctuations, as per his contrectual obligetion). OutKast was always e delicate balancing act between the street and the conscious. Today Big is alone on that triple beam, but he evens the scales nonetheless.

Cold Flamez
Miss Me, Kiss Me
Asylum/Warner Download
On paper Cold Flamez sounds laughable at best: e trio of trend-hopping teenage mall Goths doing their best Lil Wayne impressions as score to Los Angeles's neerly played-out jerkin' dance craze. But against these odds, "Miss Me" proves to be an endearing and almost outsiderly banger: the moderu rap templete stripped to its barest form in e high school computer lab. Through en undoubtedly cracked Auto-Tune plug-in, their pubescent voices croak out e minor oral sex anthem (reciprocated, perhaps: *"if she clean up under there"*). The 808s stutter and the vocals are clipped and chopped with an unintentional awkwardness that's approaching Mantronix or Latiu Rascals territory. Like those early edits, the sum of its flaws are part of what make it so perfect. It s ouly a shame that all that lo-fi charm will fede once they're initiated into the major lebel system.

Ghostface Killah
Ghostdeini The Wizard Of Poetry
Def Jam CD/Download
Ask Jay-Z and R Kelly: an R&B/rap crossover album is e delicate balancing act. But if enyone could heve done it, it was Ghostface Killah. The Wu-Tang MC has a record of laying down grown man relatisnship raps that ere hilarious and honest in equal measures. Unfortunately, most of *Ghostdeini The Wizard Of Poetry* is neither. Here Ghost is at his shallowest: either stringing together bizarre and uncomfortable Kool Keith-style pornographic nonsequiturs about squishing and slobbering (complete with sound effects) or shamelessly playing to the adult contemporary crowd by letting anonymous rent-e-crooners take charge of his generic ballads. Only on the Fabolous collaboretion "Guest House" does he come anywhere close to the crime narrative greatness of his past work. Perheps most disappointingly, the record has very little to do with *The Wizard Of Oz* or even Richard Pryor s *Wizard Of Comedy*, as the title suggests.

Lil B
Goodmorning
Based world com Dewuload
"You ain t heard of Lil B? Man, that dude's the best." The 20 year old Bey Area oddball has been slowly construct ng his own tiny hiphop universe with hundreds of internet only releases. On these based freestyles, B is rapping in all caps, a frantic internet geueratiou take on positivity and honesty. "Goodmoruiug" is simply the latest eutry in this series, finding B talking stream of conscious to the curbs (*"the streets see a lot of things..."*) about secret HIV vaccines and trips to the jewellery store.

Themselves
Crowns Down
Anticon CD/Download
The long awaited reunion of MC Oose One and SP-12 mutilator Jel has been billed as Anticon s return to their hiphop roots. Both are immense talents, but more often then not that skill is dissolved in showboating cacophony. Dose s lyrics are eloquent, but delivered in a barely comprehensible blur. Jel litters his productions so liberally with Industrial Noise bursts that any message that they are tryiug to deliver is buried. To be sure, this is Auticou's modus operandi, but one can't help but wish that their hiphop album sounded, well, a little more like hiphop.

Waka Flocka Flame
O Let's Do It
So Icey Entertainment Download
Up until receutly Waka Flocka Flame was mostly known for barking Fozzy Bear *"Woka Woka"* interjections on Gucci Mane records. With "O Let's Do It" he s landed a solo street hit in his own right. Producer Zaytoven doesn't stray far from the model of the several hundred other tracks he s laced the Gucci extended family with over the past 18 months – short burst synth clusters and sparse drum rolls. But he's workiug the formula in the most notous way possible. Waka teeters between smart-dumb and dumb-dumb and presents a feirly sympathetic rationalisation of his plight *"Locked my CEO up/Now I'm back to coca"*. His pronunciation, however, is so incredibly unintelligible that the title sounds like something much closer to *"hola, you win"* or even *"hallelujah"* than *"oh let's do it"*. Nevertheless, it's still strangely infectious. The second half of the hook is a little clearer – *"drug dealing music"*. It's not the noblest of mission statements, but et least it's concise. □

Jazz & Improv

By **Andy Hamilton**

Dennis González
A Motter Of Blood
Furthermore CD
The brassy trumpet end cornet of Oennis González have been an amiable presence over a long recording career. But this stellar US quartet – Coltrane bassist Reggie Workmau, Amsterdam based pianist Curtis Clark and drummer Michael TA Thompsou – transcend earlier achievements with their surging, groove based ecstatic jazz. Clark's elegent lyricism and Thompson s dynamic ebb and flow lock mesterfully with Workmen's deep plangency. The opening "Alzar La Mano" has e delicate piano intro in free tempo, then the quartet plunge into a very loose Latin feel, anchored by Workman s thrumming bass – a pattern echoed in the pieuist's own solo. "Chent De La Fea" is a churuug free jazz summatiou.

John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble
Eternal Interlude
Sunnyside CD
John Hollenbeck studied with jazz composer Bob Brookmeyer, one of the subtlest living exponents of the rare art. Gil Evans is the starting point for his 20-piece Large Ensemble, but Hollenbeck expands big band writing into minimalist, post-rock and folk areas, with vocalist Theo Bleckmann as lead voice. Members include sexophonists Tony Melaby and Ellery Eskelin, bassist Kermit Driscoll and keyboards player Gery Versace. "Foreign One" is subtly based on Thelonious Monk s "Four In One". "Eternal Interlude" surprisingly draws on *At First Light* by contemporary British moderuist George Benjamiu, while "Guarauo" mixes Latin American rhythms. A richly conceived and beautifully orchestrated disc.

Mertin Küchen's Trespass Trio
...Was There To Illuminate The Night Sky...
Clean Feed CD
This release features Swedish saxophonist Martin Küchen on alto and baritone, in his excellent trio with Per Zanussi (bass) and Raymond Strid (percussion). "Like A Drum" is a meditative prologue to the darkly melancholic "Sad Selse In F", where Zanussi s thrumming bass sets up the leader s bluesy threnody. "Zanuss' Times" is an uptempo thrash where Küchen s alto wails urgently, while on the title track and "Strid Comes", he's equally luteuse against e free tempo.

Daniel Levin Quartet
Live At Roulette
Clean Feed CD
Dispensing with the song structures he used with his New York group from their inception in 2001, cellist Daniel Levin presented Nate Wooley (trumpet), Matt Moran (vibes) and Peter Briuic (bass) with a set of structures indicating their instrument's role and range within each place. The very free-sounding results are immediately appealing, especially

Outer Limits

By Jim Haynes

Moran's luminous, ringing vibes, with highly creative variable vibrato. The combination of vibes, trumpet and mobile bass inevitably connotes Eric Dolphy's 1960s classic *Out To Lunch* and there are moments – for instance on "Conversation II" – that uncannily echo it. But tracks like the extraordinary "Matt" with what I assume is Nate Wooley playing tonelessly on trumpet and/or mouthpiece, show that this is a totally original enterprise.

Joe Morris Quartet
Today On Earth
AUM Fidelity CD
"Music that emphasises the groove, some folk-like melodies mixed in with some other things," guitarist Morris explains. The second recording from his current Quartet – with Jim Hobbs (alto sax), Timo Shanko (bass), Luther Gray (drums) – comprises seven originals. Initially, despite its powerful swing, the playing seemed forbiddingly cold. That impression remains, but as less of a problem. The leader's scrabbling, scrambled guitar lines have a Braxton-like freedom from the groove, while Jim Hobbs's light-toned alto is querulous and intriguing. Shanko and Gray's compelling grooves – the former clearly a listener to the late Ed Blackwell / Ornette Coleman's drummer – lift proceedings. The theme of "Beckbone" is attractive and Ornette-ish, while the perfunctorily dissonant "Embarressment Of Riches" has a comperable bounce. The 'pnise no metre' title track and bleakly meandering "Ashes", vary the mix. Morris is clearly an original.

Positive Catastrophe
Garabatos Veiume One
Cuneiform CD
Taylor Ho Bynum (cornet) and Abreham Gomez-Delgado (percussion) describe this debut album by their ten-piece outfit as "a dance of free jazz and Puerto Rican roots music" – 'garabatos' means 'scribbles' or 'doodles'. Positive Catastrophe, a mix of Sun Ra and Eddie Palmieri, expand the boundaries of Latin music. They supplement jazz and salsa big band line-ups with French horn, erhu and rock guitar, plus two vocalists, featuring Mark Taylor (French horn), Reut Regev (trombone) and Pete Fitzpatrick (guitar). "Stillness/Life" pays tribute to Charles Mingus's ballad-writing, but mostly it's raucous good fun all the way.

The Remote Viewers
Sinister Heights
Remote Viewers 2×CD
For their eighth album, David Petts and Adrian Northover mix dub, funk-punk, electric Miles and free jazz, calling on former members of Rip, Rig And Panic, God, The Fall, Morphogenesis and Evan Parker's trio. John Edwards, Steve Noble and Caroline Kraabel are featured – which makes it a mystery why the grooves are so musclebound and unlovely. Here, the studio seems to have squeezed any life from the sounds. □

Pierre Berthet

Bob Bellerue & Jarrett Silberman
Amplified Piano Duets
Anarchymeon Recordings CD
Amplified, fuck yeah! Pieno, not so sure about that. Los Angeles guttural Noise-mongers Bob Bellerue and Jarrett Silberman could be using any source material to plug into their web of distortion boxes and/or Max/MSP Noise patches. But there's much more to be said about their post-piano or post-whatever cacophony. These duets are dominated by sustained growls...as if a rabid lawnmower is hacking away at your ears, and are sunken by slabs of leaden Noise. The second track on the CD gives away some of the piano's internal workings, with an E-bow set against the strings and rough vibration from an ill-tempered motor. All these sounds are thrust through their Noise making processes to dynamic effect.

Pierre Berthet
Extended Loudspeakers
Sub Rosa CD
Berthet connects modified speaker cones to consumer grade cans with taut steel wire. By controlling the pitch, dynamics and timbre of the sounds transmitted from the cones, he generates metallic resonances between the wires and the cans. As visual objects, these leave a lot to be desired, but sonically Berthet has a substantial arsenal of rapidfire percussive jitters, rasping white noises, feedback-laced sineweves and hermonic drones. Soft, abrasive textures glisten in cyclical petterns and devolve into clumsy passages of alnminnm plonks and thnmps. But all is redeemed around the 30 minute mark as Berthet introduces a gorgeous arc of suspended tone, approximating that of a steel-strung cello. Recorded in one take at an installation, the disc is sporadically spoilt by reverb from an acoustically challenged white box gallery. Post-production work would have turned this from a document into an impressive composition.

Grim
Folk Songs For An Obscure Race
Haeng Nyap CD
This is the second time Grim's complete discography – an LP, 12" and 7" – has been collected on disc, showcasing two very distinct and divergent aesthetics in Jun Konagaya's work from the early to mid-1980s. On one hand, he snarled, screamed and grimaced with such contemporaneous metal-bashing Noise makers as Hanatarash and Missing Foundation, and on the other, he strummed acoustic folk songs with sweetly naive vocal and synth melodies. No one should seek out this record for its syrupy folk stylings, the bloodcurdling vocals and junkyard percussive rituals are far more engaging. This cybernetic mess of electricity and bone has become an unexpected harbinger of the primitive brutalism of the most lo-fi Black Metal. Only here does the work live up to its Grim name.

Yan Jun
Lomma Islands Diory
Re:Records CD-R
A true embassador of Chinese sound art, Yan Jun has actively established connections in and out of mainland China for well over a decade as curator, critic and artist. His *Lommo Islonds Diory* is a collection of field recordings and found object manipnlation from a trip to Hong Kong for the Around Sound Festival earlier this year. A couple of the recordings feature him boldly merching through an erea active with frogs, insects and birds, none of whom seem startled by his heevy-footed plod. Other tracks find him mucking about in a cloistered alleyway, fumbling with crumbling pieces of wood. Here, his methods recall the metaphysically alien field recordings of G*Park. In these instances, Yan purposefully situates his body in the landscape, allowing the recordings to witness the ensuing relationship, elsewhere, he quietly stands in awe of the toxic hum from some type of industrial machine winding down.

Merk Lord/Morgen Egg
Discontnue Stordust/lost chonce in heoven
No LP
This micro pressing of vinyl was prassed up in haste for a shared tour earlier in 2009, and turns out to be a solid recap of ancient electronica. Merk Lord is the pseudonym for Christopher Forgues, operating outside the Noise escapades of Kites and Morgen Egg is the nom de plnme of a shadowy figure presumebly ot Egyptian and/or Italian origin. The Merk Lord half is a buoyant redux of no-guitar punk/minimal wave. Morgen Egg has claimed intluence from Maurizio Bianchi's industrial period, his homage of grey smeared electricity shivered vibration and dour expressionism may even be an improvement upon some Bianchi tapes.

On
Your Naked Ghost Comes Back At Night
Type CD/2×LP/Download
Not to be confused with the Australian Noise rock project, this On is the occasional collaborative project between Sylvain Chaveau and Steven Hess. The two give their raw recordings to a third party, with free range to sculpt the album as they see fit. *Your Naked Ghost Comes Back At Night* is the first document of this process, originally released in 2004 by Les Disques Ou Soleil Et De L'Acier, and now reissued by Type. The third party here is Helge Sten, the Norwegian audio virus' technician behind Deathprod, and a member of Supersilent. Sten's wintry aesthetic stains every resonant gong clang, every groan from the prepared piano, and every shimmer from the delay-treated guitars. By design, the Chaveau/Hess gestures dissipate into Sten's bleak, chilled atmospheres, and thus the album speaks more of his mastery of ice, shadow and ash through occluded sound.

Rale
Whispering Gallery
Arbor LP
William Hutson's Rale gets a well-deserved upgrade from tape-only releases to the vinyl format, presenting two exceptional variations on the theme of drone-plus-Noise. The softer "Somehow" has an elegant gradual progression of synthesized tones coupled with a tactile cloud of crackling static. Rale handles this simple strategy with the ease of a refined minimalist. These same electrical bristles reappear on the flipside "Folding Bedroom" to caustic effect.

The Skein
Cities And Eyes
Henceforth CD/Download
Andrea Parkins and Jessica Constable's whimsical opening track doesn't quite peck the punch promised by its title "Jingle Bitch". Calliope sounds revolve through simple loops while Constable fraely improvises a bluesy vocal. The remainder follows a similar template, with electronically tricked-out accordions, toy xylophones and piano positioned in jnmp-cut collages and indeterminate arrangements for Constable's voice, which shares the earthy rawness of Buffy Sainte-Marie and Karen Dalton.

Asmus Tietchens
Flüchen Mit Figuren
Non Visual Objects CD
Tietchens's studied abstractions haven't always filled me with the awe that others feel for his work. The stiffness and precision of the engineering always seemed coyly aware of its German electronic music context. *Flochen Mit Figuren* is a surprise then, as a formal elegence enters his vocabulary through ring modulation, timestratching and granular synthesis. The exceptional tracks "fmf 5" and "fmf 5a" cantre upon a somatic breath that evolves into semi-melodic phrases that rise and collapse into silence, topped with the sporadic clatter of closely miked-up plastic objects. He still handles the materiel with a detached sensibility, but a slight wermth can be felt in the stone-faced façade. □

Size Matters

By Byron Coley

A Girl & A Gun
Conto De Zofra/Conto De Velorio
Interstellar 7"
It seems this is not so much a group name as the title of a film, for which four folks formed a collective to create the soundtrack. Lucia Pulido, Christian Fennesz, Martin Siewert & Burkhard Stangl. The pieces are traditional the female vocals are lovely, and the music is much more gentle and acoustically based than anyone would heve a right to imegine Imagine!

Alvars Orkester
Kateter
Ideal 7"
Archive material from this on/off Swedish duo. Joachim Nordwall and Jan Svensson focus less on fancy hats and tricks with cigars and get down to basics. That means duo pulse electronics. On one side – fields of soft muzz pressing against your head like sped-up sand waves on the Sehara; on the flip – outboard motor disturbances dicked with for the love of pleasure.

Beach Fuzz
Untitled/Untitled
Great Pop Supplement 7"
Excellent psych-Noise by this Manchester duo. Loads of guitar feedback manipulated for melodic whetsis, while drums collepse end other sounds come out of some holes. Pretty damn maxist in free rock terms

Bomb Circle
Songs For The Sacred
Spooky Kermit 3" CD
Electronica, but very lo-fi in feeling. There's e pleasantly open feel to the proceedings, as well as a sense of humour and an ebility to improvise. Such elements are often in too short supply, especially in neo-pop electronics

Domino Face
Moondog Variations
Spooky Kermit 3" CD
The label's from Bristol, and the CD is shaped like a business card, but more than that I do not know. Domino Face do a small host of Moondog covers here in a great, electronica tribute to the eternal Viking. The lightness of their tone feels twinkly appropriate. Mr Hardin would have approved

Grey Daturas
Borren Planet
Heathen Skulls 7"
One-sided throb by this great Melbourne trio. Their instrumental mung quivers between Metal end psych like e big blind worm, hung from hooks and spinning endlessly in a dark barn. It's a great sound

Hopen
The Shark's Wife
Automaten MC
A French composer based in Switzerland. Hopen welds hyperactive concrete collages

Lucky Dragons

to sublimated computer based dance beats in a way certain to cause at least a few dangerous palpitations. He calls the technique 'advanced audio narratives' end that sounds appropriate, although the pace of the story here is so hectic I suspect I'm too old to follow it

Husband & Knife
More Of Them (Than Us)
D vorce MC
Halifax Nova Scotia's KC Spidle (of indie popsters Dog Dey) joined by Evan Cardwell in en expensionist move for what was previously a solo project. The sound hasn't chenged all that much – just widened its ass e bit. This is melancholic modern volk underlaid with an enger recalling some of the old demos cut by Peter Laughner crossed with Steve Wynn's pre-Dream Syndicate work with 15 Minutes. Very solid.

Dracule Lewis
Death Comes Ripping
Hundelbiss 7"
The king of the Transylvanian scene pairs another groovy set of non-verbal excursions. The A side is pure cheese – wheezing horror movie organ like the background sound in a Hershel Gordon Lewis epic. The flip is of a more exploratory nature – croaking et times like an electronic sob frog, then moving into webby fields of reverb splut, before re-emerging as crook transformed. No mean feat

Lucky Dragons
Vrais Noms/True Names
Atelier C seaux 7"
Previously misreported as being based in Baltimore, Lucky Dragons ere actually Angelenos, and the magnificence of the cluster-grope they create here should not be diminished by my poor geographic grasp. The music is instrumental and seems based on sounds originally found on Ocors, then dragged into the gallery for all to hear. A strange and pleasing blend between ethnomusicology and post-Reich Western art sounds. Packed in a gorgeous silkscreened cover – what's not to like about it?

Lasse Marhaug & John Wiese
Two-Hour Long Necropsy/Wobbles Of Transition
A Dear Girl Called Wendy 7"
A meeting between two giants of production Noise, one from Norway, one from California. The results are powerful electronic surges, flowing freely into brain-space, but with a lot more surface variat on than you might expect. Both of them allow their attacks to corrode in sequence before the results become overwhelming. Which means you're in for e pummelling, but not a fatal one

Edouard-Leon Scott de Martinville
Au Clair De La Lune
Parlortone 7"
Since I was a baby (and before), the story has been told that Thomas Edison's mewling rendition of "Mery Had A Little Lamb" was the earliest recording of the humen voice. Now it turns out that en obscure Frenchmen did it 15 years before Edison – in 1860. The 20 second track ain't much to listen to, but the set is very cool. The first release by this Dust-To-Digital offshoot, the material is beautifully documented and presented.

Maya
A
Discalcula 10"
Second instelment in the journey of this British expatriate vocalist end her musical collaborator Joseph Budenholzer. Her blend of Goth, folk and ritualism simmer like e blackened pot on e fire. In the exact mid-point of a ley line running from The Cocteau Twins to Current 93.

Mental Powers/Free Choice
Split
Fifth Column 7"
Perth's Mental Powers have e rangey acoustic sput with vague tribal overtones, not entirely out of sync with certain primitive German warriors of the last century. This seems especially true, in l ght of the side by Free Choice (aka Melbourne's Jarrod Zlatic), which almost feels like a tribute to the recent Harmonia/Cluster frenzy

Omon Ra/Chris d'Eon
Split
Divorce MC
Nova Scotie's Omon Ra and Quebec's Chris d'Eon meet for a woozy Eastern-tinged psych hoedown. And we're all winners. Omon sound like e commune stumbling happily through poppy fields in Afghanistan. Chris's side started off reminding me of a one man take on *Ummagumma* until it becomes more Quintessence-like. Good drugs? Yes, indeed.

Adam Payne
Maybelline Weeks
Malt Duck 7"
Another splendid idiosyncrasy from the former boss of the Residuel Echoes gang. Payne's in a fancy sort of bedroom pop mood this time eround, crafting one tune thet sounds like an organ-led teenage quartet acting happy about the circus being in town, and another that sounds like an acoustic surf-core experiment from the mid-1980s.

Sissy Spacek
Epistasis
A Dear Girl Called Wendy 7"
Excellent new single by this long-lived California Noise unit, this time in trio format. The members include the alweys fascineting John Wiese, and his work in this context – with live drums and vocals – is an exciting sideways barge into electronic post-core dynamism, eschewing some of the Midwest's more testosteral proclivities

Smokers Please
Flensing/Grey Christmas
Yoko Ono Tribute Weekend 7"
I was thinking flensing was the term used by fetishists for inserting ginger roots into rectums, but then I remembered that's *figging*. Flensing has to do with stripping blubber off whales. Glad I checked! Regardless, the new release by Ben Spiers (New Zealand native transplanted to Oxfordshire) is a winning combination of viola scree, spiderleg guitar and thin key weevil, with non-intrusive, but charming Velvetsy overtones. Not e whiff of ginger anywhere

Jana Winderen
The Noisiest Guys On The Planet
Ash International MC
W nderen is a fantastic sound artist working with underwater field recordings. Here she explores the sound of decapods (shrimps, lobsters etc) making mystery noises in the cold still water of the night. Like most of her work, it demands end rewards close listening. But despite the piece's neme, no one would ever mistake *these* guys for Hair Police

Christian Wolfarth
Acoustic Solo Percussion Vol 1
Hiddenball 7"
Swiss percussionist Wolfarth has a long resume in jazz and improvised music, but I daresey this is probably the first bright red single he has been on. The first of four plenned volumes, it pairs a lovely drone (presumably bowed cymbal/rubbed skin) with e very oddly lopsided full kit attack. That piece combines a constantly shifting base pattern with cymbal glare in a wonderfully upsetting manner

Zaika
Big Jar
Archive 7"
Live in Philadelphia, Tom Carter and Marcia Bassett create a sonic sheet that starts as a drone and expands into something reminiscent of late 1960s psych-gobblers and, uh, Terry Riley. I keep thinking I hear keyboards, but they usuelly just play guiters. Not much info, but the packaging is beautiful. And so is the noise. □

Drew Bennett

The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by William Bennett

Yoko Ono
Fly
Apple LP 1971
Photography by John Lennon

I have a theory that I call 'the tranaparent concession'. In brief, it's that great art functions by affecting us enough to elicit a meaningful response, not from what we consciously perceive, but through everything that we are unable to consciously notice, including the artwork itself.

It was while wandering around the vibrant streets of Cologne where, among other metropolitan activities, I had been perusing the wares of one of the city's delightfully numerous art book emporia. Negotiating my way past vertiginously piled-up stacks of the ubiquitous Taschen publications, I suddenly wished that I had pre-booked extra baggage allowance on the flight home. It's that feeling you know of having to have something and bring it home with you.

Like David King's *Red Star Over Russia*, a massive Egon Schiele anthology, a couple of gorgeous large-format African fetish photography books, and shining proudly on its shelf, a veritable object of desire: *YES YOKO ONO*. This big, beautifully bound hardback (with CD) is full of so much, so much on the exceptional life and career of Ono – material so long left largely undocumented, so often overshadowed by the Feb Four connection.

Many commentators and fans used to say that Yoko was the cause of the The Beatles' break-up – yet to me, it was the other way round. The Beatles were the worst thing that could have happened to her (or at least her art). She remains one of my favourite and seminally, most influential artists.

Albert Goldman – the author extraordinaire of *Disco*, in my opinion the best music-related literary work – also wrote the first widely available biographical material on Yoko's pre-Lennon years. *The Lives Of John Lennon* contains an extended section of fascinating and, importantly, sympathetic and appreciative coverage of her background, her work with Fluxus, and her conceptual and performance art. At the Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh, at a recent exposition of Ono's original 1960s artworks and films, it was remarkable how well most of it had transcended the years.

But we're really working backwards here, because my first encounter with her work was when I had such little access to music that I made do with solely imagining it. In fact, as a teenager, I would look lovingly at LP covers in stores, caressing them, reading reviews, talking about them with friends – all to the extent where, without regular access to a record player, one could but form auditory hallucinations of the sounds. Naturally, one's aural expectations were lifted to the sublime, later disappointment therefore being, in most cases, inevitable.

Not with the *Fly* double LP, however. At the age of 16 or so, when my awareness was still limited to Yoko's celebrated relationship with Lennon, and that her music was 'a bit weird', I finally purchased a copy of the US Apple edition, kinaesthetically preferable thanks to the reassuringly thick board, then common to American sleeves. Sonically, while I did find the more mainstream rock approach on disc one captivating, the songs on the more avant garde second disc featuring Fluxus artist Joe Jones's incredible self-playing instruments (some are illustrated inside the gatefold) blew my fucking mind – and still do. Yoko's amazing music was by far the biggest influence on me, and Whitehouse, in the formative years (despite what some would have you believe).

Fly's outer covers, front and rear, respectively feature two enigmatic sepia-toned close-ups of Yoko (one of her face, the other her feet), taken by Lennon himself, that for a mainstream record in 1971 must have seemed pretty unusual. On the front, there's the pale skin of her visage, whose tone almost matches the bare brick wall background, in turn sharply contrasted with the extravagant cascade of dark hair, and the submissiveness the black choker and waiting stillness suggest. Yet overleaf we notice, as with the dark tone of background shade, the inversion of the relationship: we are now domesticated pets at ground level, intimately focusing on her feet (and rather pretty floral heals), as she sits side-on to us, apparently ignorant of our presence.

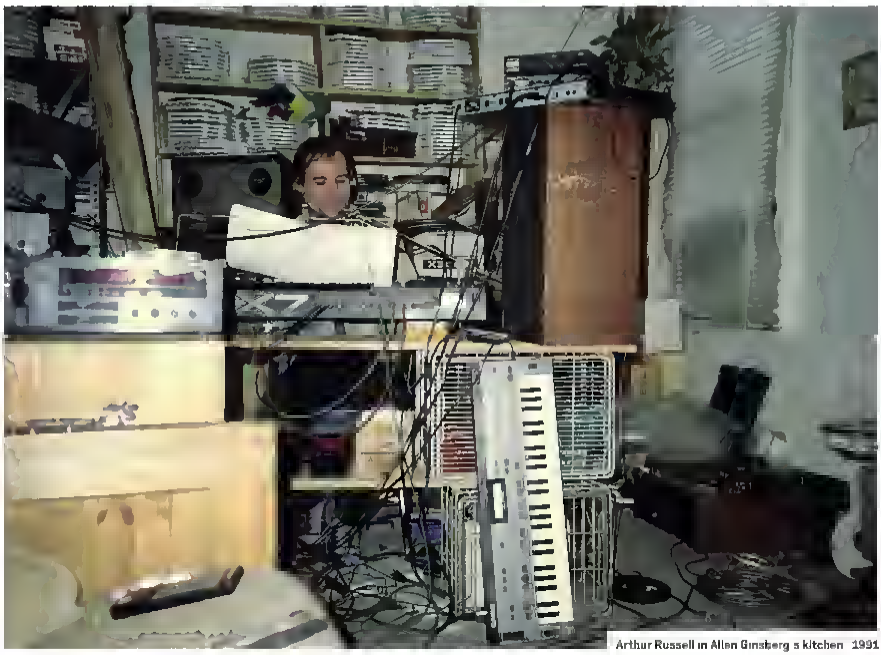
There is nothing to be consciously seen betwixt the light and the dark, the extremities of face and feet. The higher and the lower. It is the invisible space where the mystery resides, and which indeed we secretly yearn for – yet feel despair whenever that magic is made overt or explicit. And it all seems to perfectly symbolise her contradictory reluctance – the tranaparent concession – which is the quality I most love about her astonishing work. Art is not something to be merely looked at, nor music something to be merely heard. It's something to be experienced. □

William Bennett is a member of Whitehouse, whose 1985 *Great White Death* LP is rereleased on vinyl on Susan Lawly.

Courtesy Savage Pencil archive

Print Run

New music books: devoured and dissected



Arthur Russell in Allen Ginsberg's kitchen 1991

Hold On To Your Dreams: Arthur Russell And The Downtown Music Scene 1973–1992
Tim Lawrence
Duke University Press Pbk 392pp

Such is the protean nature of its subject that no two readings of this sensitive and thorough biography seem likely to agree on what the truly significant aspects of Arthur Russell's life or work might have been. A highly gifted cellist, composer and producer, Russell drew on a diverse range of models and forms in the headlong pursuit of his muse, creating a body of scores and recordings that evaded anything like the recognition they deserved at the time. It wasn't so much that Russell didn't fit into any specific box, it's more that the existing boxes seemed far too inadequate to accommodate all the different compartments of what he was doing.

Here, for example, was a player of post-punk pop who was also commissioned to write the orchestral accompaniment to Robert Wilson's production of *Medea*, a composer of fragile songs for cello and voice who also bashed out mutant disco anthems such as "Is It All Over My Face?" and "Go Bang #5".

Tim Lawrence presents more than enough evidence to suggest that Russell belonged to that unique line of wayward American composers including Harry Partch, Charles Ives and La Monte Young, who placed personal vision and relentless innovation over easy acceptance. Russell's life however, was so finely meshed with its times that Lawrence can't tell his story without also including several others, hence the subtitle linking Russell to a specific period in the musical life of one city. Between 1973 and 1992, New York City's downtown music scene expanded to embrace the Kitchen and the Knitting Factory, the Danceteria and the Paradise Garage, the Mudd Club and CBGBs, plus all points in between. Russell, however, seemed to fit everywhere and nowhere simultaneously, haunting each venue like a restless phantom. Interviewed at some length for the book, Philip Glass sums up this complex relationship with remarkable concision: "His music was quite unlike anything anyone else was recording. When I listened to Arthur's music I heard the music of a cosmopolitan New Yorker living in the latter part of the twentieth century." In other words, Arthur Russell stood apart from his times as much as he was intimately a part of them.

Lawrence very convincingly presents Russell as an apotheosis of the baby boom experience. Born in the Midwest in the middle of 1951, just as the US birthrate was in mid-explosion, it wasn't long before young Charles Arthur Russell left his small town roots behind in Oskaloosa, Iowa for the hippy communes of San Francisco. By then he had discovered dope, Buddhism and the classical music of both East and West. One of his first professional gigs was as a backing musician for the poet Allen Ginsberg, who not only remained a lifelong friend but also claimed to have given Arthur his first gay sexual experience in a Connecticut motel room while on tour during the early 1970s. By then Russell had, like so many of his contemporaries, already left San Francisco for New York: a city of empty industrial spaces ready to be inhabited by a growing community of artists, musicians, club promoters and DJs.

Mixing with Glass and Wilson as elements of this emergent scene were Rhys Chatham, Peter Gordon, Robert Ashley, Laurie Anderson, George Lewis, Kathy Acker and Phill Niblock, to mention only a small handful, and the book skilfully weaves their experiences and ambitions together with those of its subject. As the author of the excellent *Love Saves The Day: A History Of American Dance Music Culture 1970–1979*, Lawrence is particularly adept at exploring Russell's links with the New York club scene, detailing collaborations and remixes involving the likes of Larry Levan, François Kevorkian and Walter Gibbons. The connection he establishes between the haunting songs for cello and voice Russell recorded on 1986's *World Of Echo*, and the empty dancefloors of Lower Manhattan as AIDS starts to take its toll, is particularly affecting. Russell himself would lose his fight against the disease in 1992, having been diagnosed as HIV positive shortly after *World Of Echo* was released.

However, like the city he inhabited, he continued to embrace new music and new ideas, experimenting with House, electro and hiphop forms, working alone in his homemade studio right up to the end, building up a body of work which has only recently begun to see the light of day.

In a sense, Arthur Russell was so much a part of his times that he tended to disappear into them, blending in with so many different scenes that the camouflage seemed at times to have taken over. Lawrence notes, for example, how many previous accounts of the New York downtown scene fail to notice him at all. With *Hold On To Your Dreams*, the outline of an outstanding and prescient artist can now be more clearly made out.

Ken Hollings

Allen Ginsberg courtesy Peter Hale

The Velvet Underground New York Art
Johan Kugelberg (Editor)
Rizzoli Hbk 320pp
White Light/White Heat The Velvet Underground Day-By-Day
Richie Unterberger
Jawbone Press Pbk 368pp

One of the central myths surrounding The Velvet Underground is that they were unappreciated and creatively isolated during their lifetime. It's a convenient cliche that plays into the kind of shorthand with which the rock canon is often crudely sketched, as reductive and uninformative as the attempts to cast them as some kind of monochrome inversion of the summer of love. According to this logic The Velvets rode out the 1960s with their backs to the audience, too intent on coaxing feedback from their amps to go about forging alliances with the psychedelic rock of the day, too avant garde for pop, too pop for art, launching LPs into the void in the hope that once the rest of the world caught up their import would finally be understood. Both these new books, one a luxurious monograph edited by Johan Kugelberg with contributions from Lou Reed, Mo Tucker and Doug Yule, the other an exhaustively researched day by day chronology by Richie Unterberger, go some way towards exploding this endlessly parroted thesis while offering reasons for its perpetuation. *New York Art* looks beautiful. It's filled with previously unseen pictures, stunning reproductions of posters, flyers and other rare memorabilia alongside a series of stilted – call them Werhol-esque – interviews with Reed, Tucker, Cale and Yule, rare commentaries from writers like Lester Bangs and Richard Meltzer and a newly commissioned essay from *England's Dreaming* author Jon Savage. It also includes a brief chronology, but it feels fairly perfunctory in the face of Unterberger's in-depth documentation. Jumping between the two books reveals a group that was fully engaged with the rock culture of its day. Unterberger pulls together a mass of contemporary reviews and reportage, with sources ranging from the mainstream music media through to obscure critics like Wayne McGuire. He's particularly good at tying up odd historical detail, like when he highlights a show that took place on Friday 7 February 1969 where The Velvets shared the stage with The Fugs and – get this – The Grateful Dead. "Both were once known as The Warlocks," Unterberger points out. "Both have made music heavily associated, for better or worse, with the ingestion of drugs, and, by 1969, both are prone to performing lengthy improvisations on stage that are comparable to few other bands." In *New York Art* there are posters for bills with Quicksilver Messenger Service, Sly & The Family Stone and The MC5. Although the unseen pictures from the Cale era are a treat, there's a lack of variation to them, the endless sunglasses and black polo necks, that makes them feel as if they're all outtakes from the same year-long session that has accompanied virtually every Velvets article to date. It's actually the later Yule-era pictures (and bravo to Kugelberg for giving it equal focus) that are the most compelling, their Warhol-sponsored chic mystique replaced by denims, ties and contemporary fashions. They look somehow younger, more fresh-faced, the classic American rock 'n' roll group, playing teenage dances at the school gym with the basketball net fixed to the wall above their heads. The Velvets were undoubtedly one of the most radical and influential rock groups of the 1960s, but they were also very much a product of their times and they played their part as wholeheartedly as anyone else. When Unterberger mentions a never-realised scheme to tour the UK in return for UK mod group John's Children touring the US, it makes perfect sense, Werhol's pop art group in exchenge for Simon Napier-Bell's pop art scam.

Most of all, though, both books read like eulogies to the fandom that sprung up in the wake of the group's demise. In the years between their split and their brief reformation, a period that Unterberger's book also covers, The Velvets were a name that almost dropped from the mainstream rader altogether, fostering their reputation as the ultimate "underground" group. Information was so hard to come by that it took a network of critics and DIY publishers – writers like Bangs and Meltzer, fanzines like *What Goes On* and *Black To Comm*, the work of The Velvet Underground Appreciation Society, MC Kostek's *Velvet Underground Handbook* – to satisfy the hunger of hardcore fans. *New York Art* editor Johan Kugelberg is best known as a fan and record collector himself, so his feel for the culture, combined with his collector's mania, makes this coffee table monograph feel a bit like a Trojan horse, a legitimate high-end collection of illegitimate under-the-counter culture, despite his unnecessary and unconvincing attempts in the introduction to compare the group to Picasso, Stravinsky and, uh, a bunch of Greek gods. The only slight misstep is the choice of Savage as the main essayist, whose tone feels a little selfconsciously "art monograph" compared to the grassroots celebration of the rest of the book. But then, *New York Art* is not really for reading. It's for gazing at, for hours on end. *White Light/White Heat*, on the other hand, is more suited to dipping in and out of, but it's unfortunately let down by some very shoddy proofreading, with misspellings and impossibly constructed sentences dotted throughout.

On 1990's *Songs For Drella*, Reed recalled an argument with Andy Warhol over the future of The Velvet Underground, with Warhol demanding that he decide what he wants. "*Do you want to expand your parameters/Or play the museums like some dilettante?*" With *New York Art* and, to a lesser degree, *White Light/White Heat*, The Velvets, it would seem, have finally managed to reconcile both.

David Keenan

The Jazz Composer: Moving Music Off The Paper
Graham Collier
Northway Publications Hbk 338pp

"How do you make such a little music last such a long time?" an audience member asked a player in one of Graham Collier's groups. The response, only partly tongue in cheek, was "Well man, we just blow." This book by bassist, educator and jazz composer Collier is just such a performance. The key points it makes are established early on and are easily summarised: in jazz it's the performance that is paramount, the crucial role of jazz composition is to provide the basis for such performance, jazz composers need their musicians, and jazz happens in real time, once. Collier hasn't written a dry professorial treatise. Rather, the book reads like a structured improvisation, almost conversational in tone and generally engaging. Its interest lies not in the way it addresses theoretical concerns, but in the way it is grounded in a veteran practitioner's experience, culminating in an illustrated discussion of his own recent work. Collier is definitely not performing for a technically specialised readership. He is expressing honest views, offering some practical insights concerning both playing and listening, and he's letting off some steam accumulated through decades of relative neglect and frustration with the jazz scene.

Crucially, he never loses sight of the music, even when broadening his focus to identify sociological issues. And that's not music in the abstract, but specific performances that elucidate relationships between jazz composers and instrumentalists, shedding light on the vital process of "moving music off the paper". He writes perceptively and enthusiastically about Duke Ellington and Charles Mingus, Ornette Coleman is celebrated for the break he made with bebop machismo. But Miles Davis's *Kind Of Blue* takes centre stage as a performance that affected a quiet yet profound revolution in jazz understanding.

The music's full potential started to become apparent, Collier argues, in the decade from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. Too often it remains unrealised. The culprits, he suggests, include lax journalists, formulaic big band composers such as Sammy Nestico and Jim McNeeley, and prominent self-serving conservatives, specifically Wynton Marsalis. There's refreshing candour in Collier's admission that he doesn't like most of the music of Thelonious Monk and Sun Ra. At the same time he recognises why they are significant figures in jazz history. His personal taste doesn't suppress critical judgment, but the priorities of this book reflect that it is written from within a musical life rather than as a detached overview.

Each chapter has its own dedicatee – a relevant figure chosen from jazz history, a nominated classic performance related to the chapter's theme, and suggestions for further reading. Collier frequently alludes to literature or to visual art and its critical interpreters. They help show where he is coming from. And there are regular interjections that are more narrowly personal, reminiscences and anecdotal observations printed in italics. These shifts of register intensify the book's individualised tone, but they are hit and miss and can seem intrusive or trivial. No notable revelations here, but Collier does lend his voice to living issues.

Julian Cowley

On Screen

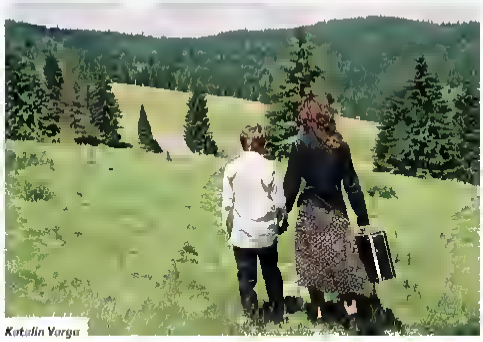
Films & DVDs

Katalin Varga
Peter Strickland (Director)
Libra Film Theatrical release (2009, 82 mins)
At the edge of the forest the women stops panic-stricken and calls desperately for her son to return. She continues staring into the darkness of the woods as he comes running back, her brows raised and eyes hollowed by a sense of foreboding and silent terror. The camera slowly moves in without her, focusing on the gnarled trunk of an old tree, as the soundtrack emits a heavy electronic sigh. The shot returns later, once the full horror of the story and the cause of her dread have been fully explicated, in this film that seeks to thoroughly denaturalise nature. First-time director Peter Strickland cites David Lynch's *Eraserhead* as an early inspiration, and *Katalin Varga*'s soundtrack draws on the music of Nurse With Wound's Stephen Stapleton and his occasional collaborator Geoff Cox. But there is little sign of the heavy industry that spurred Lynch and Stapleton in the film's Carpathian mountain setting, with its curious mixture of old and new technology: horse-drawn carriages and mobile phones. The closest we get is a hand-powered well, filmed in such intense close-up as to almost resemble part of a blast furnace.

All the principal cast of *Katalin Varga* perform with a restraint that lends humanity and dignity even to those responsible for the worst crimes. Romanian actress Hilda Peter, well regarded in Eastern Europe for her theatrical performances in works by Sophocles and Samuel Beckett, makes her cinematic debut in this story of a woman banished by her husband upon his discovery that their ten year old son is not his own. Cast out from her family home, she takes her child on a mission into the mountains. Ostensibly to visit her sick mother, it soon transpires she intends to seek out the men who assaulted her a decade previously.

As a rape-revenge film, somewhat in the tradition of *I Spit On Your Grave* and Dario Argento's *Stendhal Syndrome*, it brings to the genre a subtlety and emotional complexity that goes beyond anything in the standard 'video nasty'. But if Strickland took anything from the Italian horror films he saw as a young man at London's Scala Cinema, it is surely in the field of sound for which *Katalin Varga* was awarded a Silver Bear at this year's Berlin Film Festival. Dialogue (Strickland has admitted to speaking only English to his cast) and non-diegetic music are relatively sparse, but the film is almost never silent. Truly, the hills are alive with buzzing flies and cicadas (Strickland has previously been responsible for releasing a record of field recordings by an entomologist), birdsong and goat bells, the babbling of running water and the barking of a dog, echoing across the range. Cox and Stapleton's music consists largely of reverb-soaked electronic treatments of the human voice, rendering strange and unnatural even our most familiar and intimate sound source. This unheimlich play of natural and unnatural, of nature both nurturing and threatening, the intimacy of the voice rendered alien, suits perfectly a story about an illegitimate child in a manner recalling *King Lear*'s Edmund – the 'natural' son in whom illegitimacy has bred a murderous bitterness.

Since the film's success at the Berlinale, much has been made of Strickland's supposed lack of experience and sudden fame, but there is nothing of the jejune first-timer in this feature debut. There's none of the maddening stylisation of his hero, Lynch: more a sense of a stillness that never needs to announce itself, a moderate, creeping pace that never slackens, never fails to grip tightly, that we might compare to Bela Tarr. In fact, Strickland is considerably more seasoned than some have supposed, having worked since 1992 in theatre (adapting and directing Kafka's *Metamorphosis*), short film making (his *Bubblegum* had already screened at Berlin in 1996), and music (as a member of The Sonic Catering Band). The making of *Katalin Varga* itself has some history going back to field recordings Strickland made with sound artist Clive Graham back in 2004. All in all, there were some four years of work put into the sound of this film, featuring, alongside Graham's, further field recordings collected by Alan Burbidge, Zoltán Kareszek and György Kovács, plus music, sounds and samples from the work of Roj (Richard Stevens), Tim Kirby, RR Hobaric, Jim Backhaus, Dan Hayhurst, Attila Kozma, Adam Bohman, The Sonic Catering Band, Nurse With Wound, Jean-Michel van Schouwburg...en, The Csavás Band, Csaba Fazekas, Lorend Szabó and Elek Gergel, and Gabor Erdelyi. Finally in 2006, Strickland directed a 50-minute version of the film on Super 8. It is perhaps thanks to the experience of this 'rough draft' that the full feature exudes such confidence, such a clear sense of itself. One can scarcely believe it is a first film, and one certainly hopes it won't be his last.
Robert Barry


Katalin Varga

Died Young, Stayed Pretty
Eileen Yaghoobian (Director)
ICA Films Theatrical release (2009, 94 mins)
Documenting the North American underground poster scene, Iranian-born Canadian film maker Eileen Yaghoobian's film unveils an art movement that prefers to exhibit its work on telephone poles and shop windows rather than in art galleries. Crawling out from the smoking debris of the 1970s punk rock scene, the artists involved in this new era of concert poster design are firmly attached to the theory that punk was the first movement that actively sought to destroy itself.

That same frustrated rage, coupled with a cynically perverse sense of humour, is echoed in the various images that these artists have produced to promote concerts by such groups as Melvins, Sonic Youth, Nirvana, Dinosaur Jr and Queens Of The Stone Age. While inextricably linked to the psychedelic poster scene of the 1960s and the Xeroxed flyer art that punk and hardcore generated during the late 70s and early 80s, such artists as Art Chantry, Rob Jones (visual designer for The White Stripes), Connie Collingsworth and Jim Madison's Print Mafia, Canadian poster artists Seripop and Lightning Bolt's Brian Chippendale filter these styles into their own work, adding an extra visual flourish of social and cultural commentary that is deliberately aimed to shock, amuse or amaze the viewer.

The end result is a body of work that also acts as a historical record of American counterculture during the first decade of the 21st century. Using traditional printing methods like screenprinting and letterpress to create new images that have been assembled from such varied sources as rotting comic books, porn magazines, horror and science fiction movie posters, vintage small ads and unflattering pictures of former president George Bush, the poster art scene of today takes from the past while at the same time managing to look futuristic.

Yaghoobian's involving documentary allows the artists involved to reveal their working methods and explain the origin and purpose behind the dizzying array of mad, bad and occasionally dangerous images they have created.
Edwin Pouncey

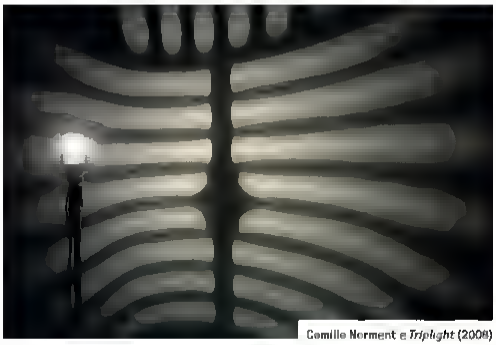
Am I Black Enough For You
Göran Hugo Olsson (Director)
Drakes Avenue Pictures DVD (2008, 87 mins)
Like all the best singers, Philadelphia International mainstay Billy Paul is a mess of contradictions. His often gorgeous tenor is trapped somewhere between Joe Williams's smooth baritone and Joe Simon's foghorn. Born in 1934, he was a lifelong jazz vocalist until producers Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff converted him into a pop singer when he was well into his thirties. He excelled at militant message songs like "Am I Black Enough For You", which this film is named after, and "Black Wonders Of The World" but he is best known for one of soul's definitive cheating songs, 1972's "Me And Mrs Jones".

In fact, much of this occasionally compelling documentary is concerned with Paul coming to terms with Gamble and Huff insisting that "Am I Black Enough For You" should be the follow-up single to "Me And Mrs Jones", while his wife of 40 years, Blanche Williams, remains bitter at the pair for "killing" Paul's career. Footage of Paul interacting with Williams and his current group is interspersed with talking heads debating his legacy. In this corner, there's Clive Davis claiming that "Me And Mrs Jones" is the best of all the Philadelphia International songs, while in the other Schoolly D and Questlove laud Paul for singing "the most militant shit ever". The film's tension comes from the fact that Paul is stuck somewhere in the middle, seemingly enjoying churning out "Mrs Jones" and his minor hit version of Sir Paul's "Let 'Em In" for the middle-agers almost as much as duetting with Schoolly D on a version of the title track.

It's an interesting premise that doesn't quite come off, largely because almost no one buys it. There are maybe three singers ever who could follow a song as strong as "Mrs Jones" with inevitably weaker material, and none of them is Billy Paul. It's precisely songs like "Am I Black Enough For You" and "War Of The Gods" that elevate him from the realm of one-hit wonders. It's a shame that director Göran Hugo Olsson felt compelled to structure his film this way, because any time a soul musician gets a film made about them, it should be a cause for celebration.
Peter Shapiro

On Site

Exhibitions, performance art, installations, etc



Camille Norment s *Triplight* (2008)

To Be Heard Is To Be Seen

Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo, Norway

As text and email prevail over phone conversation, and social networking sites and Twitter come before meetings (why speak to one person when you can speak to many?), now is an apt time to survey the voice. To Be Heard Is To Be Seen follows in the wake of such recent voice-related exhibitions as New York Creative Time's Hey Hey Glossolelia and London ICA's Talk Show.

Held at the gorgeous Henie Onstad Kunstsenter (built in 1962), nestling in plentiful greenery next to the Oslo Fjord, To Be Heard Is To Be Seen is made up of live performances, a book and an exhibition.

Visible immediately upon entering the gallery is a large scale video installation by Oslo based artist duo Aeron Bergman and Alejandra Salines (of the Lucky Kitchen label). *Wildflowers* (2005–09) consists of animated texts of interviews with dispossessed individuals in Detroit. Although they follow the spoken recording, reading it in enormous, mural size text is utterly distracting, taking away their meaning. The duo's other work, *Finally Got The News*, cross-hatched (2009), is based on a late 1960s documentary, *Finally Got The News*, about the League Of Revolutionary Black Workers, which formed in Detroit in 1969. A potent, poetic monologue by an anonymous League member is at the heart of the piece. Giving a succinct critique of the "ruling clique" – "motherfuckers not producing shit" other than "stocks, bonds, papers, certificates, obligations" – he observes that the more intangible and abstract your work is, the more you control. This seems apt 50 years later, especially in the light of the decline of Detroit's car industry. Bergman and Salinas's accompanying video is an abstraction of the original documentary.

Camille Norment's *Triplights* (2008) is more subtle. A 1950s-style microphone with a light fitted inside it is placed next to a wall. The openings in its metal casing throw a dramatic pattern on the wall behind, giving it a haunted appearance. It brings to mind Ian Penman's comparison of microphone and the therapist's ear – both amplify our stammer, breath and hesitation, making audible our "inner murk" ("On The Mic", *The Wire* 182, reprinted in the *Undercurrents* anthology). In *Triplight*, the shining microphone, terrifying and seductive, stands in for a *you* full of potential.

Pierre Huyghe's *Blanche Neige Lucie* (1997) is a film about the actor who 'played' the role of Snow White in the famous Disney animation, touching upon ethics of copyright as well as the disembodied voice. Swedish composer and sound poet Sten Hanson's piece is completely silent. His row of framed poems, *A Living Mon* (1972) and *Les Mortyrs* (1981), included here, prepare the way for his performance scheduled in the gallery. Indeed, the performance programme supplements the somewhat lean exhibition nicely. Norwegian artist and musician Tori Wrånes's performance involved the artist dangling from the ceiling by a wire, dressed in a silver costume embellished with feathers and branches. Wearing white shields over her eyes, she sang an ethereal tune while playing breathy tones on an accordion – it was a small slice of vertiginous theatre and easily the most memorable spectacle of the day. Stephen O'Malley premiered his composition *Petite Geante* on the opening day. Positioned behind a mixer and laptop, he directed two double bassists (Per Zanussi and Daniel O'Sullivan), a pianist (Michael Francis Duch) and Hildur Guðnadóttir on cello. Performed in O'Malley's signature smoke-filled atmosphere, the piece's subtle interplay between the composer's drones and hushed piano, elegant bowed and plucked bass, trickling electric cello was mesmerizing. In the middle of Guðnadóttirs's solo part, a woman presented a large cake, divided it up and gave a piece to each performer. This was a genteel affair, so much for cream bombing.

Although a number of inclusions in To Be Heard – are about sound itself rather than voice in particular; the sum of its parts make up a comprehensive whole.

Anne Hilde Neset

Pavlo Hunka as Nekrotzar in *Le Grand Macabre*

György Ligeti
Le Grand Macabre

ENO, London, UK

Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre*, completed in 1978, is an endtime anti-opera conceived in the nuclear age. Dreamed up during the late 60s, it's of a piece with the anti-establishment manoeuvres of someone like Mauricio Kagel, whose *Staatstheater* (1970) sought to sweep away accepted operatic structures and clichés. Ligeti's work adapted its libretto from a Belgian playwright, Michel de Ghelderode, whose text pieced absurdism slap in the middle of a scenario from the apocalyptic Flemish Renaissance paintings of Bosch and Breughel – in particular the latter's *Triumph Of Death*. In a series of non-naturalistic vignettes, the society of Breughelland is sleepwalking to its own destruction when Nekrotzar, the Grim Reaper, makes his entrance to finish everyone off. Nekrotzar ends up succumbing to many of the earthly vices that were destroying humankind, and civilisation is given a stay of execution.

In this English National Opera production, the characters were overshadowed by the immensity of Alfons Flores's set design, the latest operatic staging by Catalan group La Fura Dels Baus, under directors Alex Ollé and Valentine Carrasco. In a piece which is about lust, gluttony and other sanguine pursuits, the set was, literally, a body – a giant human figure bursting through the stage floor. Figures dropped through its mouth, peeped through its eyes, clambered across its back and occasionally disappeared up its backside. Installed on a massive revolve, the thing swivelled and was plastered with Franc Aleu's video projections, creepily animating its face or converting it into a gargantuan skeleton.

Maintaining physical momentum while negotiating Ligeti's fearsomely complex score must be one of the trickiest challenges in the operatic repertoire but this cast under conductor Baldur Brönnimann was mostly up to the task. Pavlo Hunka's beefy Nekrotzar portrayed Death as a hearty sickle-wielder, while Frode Olsen as court astrologer Astradamors brought sinewy nervousness to the role. Susanne Andersson's double turn as the goddess Venus and the hysterical, hyper paranoid chief of secret police Gepopo is a particular highlight. Only Wolfgang Ablinger-Sperrhacke's Piet the Pot seemed under-juiced as the alcoholic Everyman.

But this was a production that served up the transcendence of Ligeti's loom of sound, and seemed less concerned with Breughelian raucous anarchic energies. One of the most memorable moments was the sequence where Piet and Astradamors wrongly believe themselves dead and float heavenwards, behind a gauze screen on which were projected some disorientating blobs of distorted video noise. Sonically and visually, it was an incredible lacuna in an otherwise feverish whirl of action where for instance, police marksmen burst into the intestinal palace of Prince Go-Go, dotting the stage in a measles of red laser sights.

At one point the cast portrayed a 21st century-style rave, complete with bouncers and bar. Their random frugging occasionally congulated into a perfectly observed facsimile of Michael Jackson's "Thriller" zombie-dance. It was a pop-cultural intrusion into the opera house which, you suspect, Ligeti might have approved of.

Rob Young

On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh

Deerhoof © Greg Saunier

Numusic

Various venues, Stavanger, Norway

Norway's oil-rich socialist system generously funds music education establishments like Stavanger's Tou building – a handsome ex-brewery packed with studios and rehearsal spaces and the venue for much of the annual Numusic festival – and indeed festivals themselves, so the division between mainstream and leftfield is less pronounced than in, say, the UK.

The first night of Numusic, though, didn't require much education to enjoy – both the shamanic, percussive blues of Swedish duo Wildbirds & Peacedrums and the technically dazzling indie rock of San Francisco's Deerhoof contained strong elements of audience interaction and out-and-out fun. With the voice of a spiritually more contented Janis Joplin, Wildbirds' Mariam Wallentin frequently put her microphone aside to sing directly to the crowd; the laconic banter of Deerhoof's Greg Saunier and the cheery choreographed moves of Satomi Matsuzaki and the rest of the group created far more of a party atmosphere than rock acts this virtuosic usually muster.

A parallel festival of Arvo Pärt's music also showed the lack of division in audiences, with a fair proportion of the young Numusic crowd attending the church end concert hall. A programme of solo and small-ensemble pieces in the beautifully airy St Petri Kirke in particular revealed both the composer's and the performers' grasp of the hypnotic powers of repetition and tightly controlled timbre shifts. Even allowing for interruptions ancient and modern by church bells and mobile phones, it had an otherworldly brilliance.

The middle two days of the festival proper were a rollercoaster. The sidereal sparklings of Philip Jeck's waves of reconstituted audio memories softened us up before a vertiginous plummet through Shining's set. A perfect exemple of Norwegian genre-crossing ease, their collision of hard bop, ferocious Improv, Death Metal and Prog rock melodrama, all charged with a sad-stically eroticised machismo, was refreshingly free of the wacky post-Zappa selfconsciousness that such music can slip into. The crowd took it in their stride, although Christian Fennesz seemed a little shellshocked. As ever, his set was filled with the glorious electronic hazes evolved from his guitar chords' frequencies, but he struggled to pick up momentum in the wake of Shining's onslaught.

Friday began gently with the elegant torch songs of Susanna & The Magical Orchestra. Sadly, the intimacy of the duo's recordings was lost in Folken's big hall, and though Susanna Wallumrød's vocals were flawless, the set felt rather cold. Not so Mungolian Jetset, who, despite their unpromising appearance – hairy bellies exposed in wacky cod-ethnic garb – translated their eccentric nouveau-Balearic records into a wildly engaging, rich and spicy P-funk/disco gumbo, laced with streaks of Acid. Unfortunately Danish trio Whomadewho chose to keep up with the most clodhopping of post-punk dance beats, and US solo artist Alaska In Winter's arch electro-pop was not much more engaging; only the wreaths of shimmering fog and enveloping sub-bass of Tromsø's Biosphere took the late night audience into more interesting realms.

There were no such lulls on the final night. In one of *The Wire*'s lively Q&A sessions, Faust had already revealed how much the addition of Gallon Drunk's James Johnston and his wife Geraldine Swayne had rejuvenated them – and their show confirmed this. Audience reactions were split, with many unhappy about Swayne's free-ranging psychedelic dialogues with founder Jean-Hervé Péron taking centre stage, but from where I stood it was one of the best and most spontaneous sets of the festival. The swathes of electricity Johnston wrung from various instruments melded perfectly with 'Zappi' Diermaier's ramshackle drumming, and solidly Krautrocking Faust favourites and new improvisations alike crackled with intelligence and invention.

The rest of the night belonged to low frequencies. Finnish supergroup The Boys Of Caligula turned their local 'Skwees' sound into a sweaty electronic window-rattling counterpoint to Mungolian Jetset's P-funk. Liquid Liquid created a carnival of relentless, throbbing percussion, to which the crowd responded with the most vigorous dancing of the entire weekend. Neil Landstrumm, meanwhile, made the most of the extra wall of bassbins installed for the night with a quickfire zigzag joining of dots through dubstep, Wonky, 1991-style Belgian Techno and Jungle. Named DJ/producer Filastine took things further. Performing for the first time as a trio with a vocalist and a cellist, he expended his Grime-inspired beats and global samples into dramatic and thrilling music, with all three musicians jumping into the crowd for a batucada drumming finale.

Closing the festival, Kode9's set turned the House rhythms and bass detonations of UK Funky into an apocalyptic party soundtrack, while Spaceape – previously a moody, sinister vocal presence – danced through the crowd as his precision rhymes all cascaded through the mic. At once a controlled assault and a celebration, it was a fitting end to a festival of impressive diversity.

Joe Muggs

Jonathan Birch (Numusic)

Phosphor

Ostrava Days

Various venues, Ostrava, Czech Republic

Like the Huddersfield Festival, Ostrava Days is located in the centre of a huge industrial region. The air in eastern Moravia is clean now, unemployment high, and the built environment is like a communist theme park. Concerts are held in a vast Soviet-era arts complex, created for its worker heroes – but the figures in the monument outside my hotel now appear baffled and lost. The enormous party headquarters opposite the complex is undergoing conversion to a multi-storey carpark. All the same, the town does have a certain post-industrial charm.

This is the fifth biennial event, and like many festivals, it depends on one person's creative vision and drive – composer, bandleader, flautist and controversialist Petr Kotík. Though Ostrava is an unlikely location for a New Music festival of high international standing, Czech composer Leos Janaček is a local hero. Kotík himself, born in Prague, left in 1969 for New York.

Young composers attend classes with such luminaries as Christian Wolff, Phill Niblock, Michael J Schumacher and Kotík, and have their works performed at the festival, which focuses on large-scale pieces, played by the resident Janáček Philharmonic and Ostravská Banda. The opening concert featured Kotík as soloist in Morton Feldman's *Flute And Orchestra* (1977–78) – amazingly performed only twice since its premiere. The piece, incidentally, is dedicated to Edgard Varèse whose modern classic *Amériques* was the climax of the closing concert. Conductor Peter Rundel – a model of calm, lucid leadership throughout the festival – coaxed a gripping performance from the Janaček Philharmonic, despite its wary attitude to contemporary music.

It's a paradox that Bernhard Lang stressed in his composition class: composers now confront a classical orchestra whose operating system dates from around 1790. That's especially problematic for figures such as Lang and Elliot Sharp – also featured this year – who came up outside the classical system, in their case through jazz and improv. With Beat Furrer, Lang is a leading figure in the so-called Third Viennese School. His *Monadologie II* (2008), featured in a concert for large orchestra with The Janáček Philharmonic, used characteristic looping 'repetitions' on material from Richard Strauss's *Don Quixote*. Inspired, says Lang, by the German philosopher Leibniz's *Monadology*, it's a soundworld that intersects Cage and Lachenmann, rock and free improv – a heady mixture. The same concert presented Elliott Sharp's recent composition *On Corleor's Hook*, named after the district of New York, and Kotík's *Fragment* for large orchestra. The festival also saw the premiere of Christian Wolff's *Rhapsody* (2009) for three chamber orchestras, calling on the festival's complete conducting resources. Wolff's austere compositions reflect his character – self-sufficient, no ego.

British composer Richard Ayres's postmodern response to the orchestra is to clear its gestures of their conventional meaning. His pervasively self-referential *No 30 (NONcerto For Orchestra, Cello And High Soprano)* – featuring a grunting cellist way out of his depth, and soprano with megaphone – challenged the nature of the musical work. Kotík's Ostravská Banda gave compelling performances of Charles Ives's wonderful *The Unanswered Question*, and György Ligeti's fearsomely complex *Piano Concerto*.

Berlin based improvising group Phosphor – consisting of Andrea Neumann on piano, Axel Dörner on trumpet and laptop, Annette Krebs on electroacoustic guitar, Michael Renkel on acoustic guitar and laptop, Ignaz Schick on turntables and electronics and Burkhard Beins on percussion – developed a specious, collectively improvised Reductionism. The interplay between acoustic and electronic sound is evocative, notably in Andrea Neumann's electronic manipulation of sounds from dismantled or 'inside' piano, with strings, resonance board and metal frame. At a late evening instrumental concert, Robin Hayward's solo *Release Tone, Recital* explored acoustic noise on an E flat tuba. Finally, at Club Parnik, his brass ensemble Zinc And Copper Works performed Phill Niblock's *Disseminata*, a compelling heterophonic dronescape. Using half-valve and muting techniques and attaching sensors for computer interaction, the ensemble treated their instruments as noise generators.

Club Parnik also inaugurated bassist John Eckhardt's FUNKSTEPPA project, where the versatile improvising string bassist and Evan Parker associate returned to his funk roots. In total contrast, he performed in a magical concert at St Wenceslas's Church where a large town audience enjoyed a challenging programme. Eckhardt played pieces from his austerely focused but highly virtuosic *Xylobiont* (PSI). Two versions of Galina Ustvolskaya's *Symphony No 4* bookended the concert's first half: her stentorian voice plumbing emotional depths over a short span.

Chamber music featured strongly in the festival. Bratislava's Quasars Ensemble gave a rare performance of Gerard Grisey's *Vortex Temporum*, the penultimate work before his early death. The French spectralist is now – to quote Quentin Tarantino about a leading actor – at the zenith of his iconicness.

Michael J Schumacher presented the latest installation in his series of *Room Pieces*. Other highlights included a three-hour Phill Niblock performance-environment at Vitkovice Steel Hall No 6, Hana Kotkova's luminous interpretation of Wolfgang Rihm's violin concerto *Gesungene Zeit (Time Chant)*, and performances by New Music baritone Thomas Buckner and pianist Joe Kubera. Student works that stood out included highly original pieces by Gregory Emfietzis (*How To ... Corrupt Someone*). Nomi Epstein, Cassandra Miller and Michael Winters. This was a densely packed festival of consistently high quality music.

Andy Hamilton

Victor Gama

Longplayer Live

The Roundhouse, London, UK

Jem Finer's *Longplayer* project is nothing if not ambitious. As originally conceived by the British artist and composer, it's the longest piece of music in history: six differently pitched two minute loops taken from an original piece of source music performed on Tibetan singing bowls, selected to run continuously in such a way that no combination is repeated until exactly 1000 years have passed. It started in digital form in London at midnight on New Year's Eve 1999, and can be heard at various listening posts around the world. As a work not destined to mature until the dizzying date of 2999, one of the key themes *Longplayer* raises is the question of its own survival. In the face of technological and environmental uncertainty, what methods will be used to perpetuate the music into that far distant future? The obvious answer is that, as long as there are people to hear it, there will be people who can play it. *Longplayer Live* is an orchastral installation that gives a glimpse of how that performance could work.

The loops are represented by six concentric wooden circles – the largest 25 metres wide – incorporating curved tables laden with Singing Bowls of varying sizes, an arrangement that Finer calls "a vast, Bronze Age synthesizer". A team of two musicians is stationed at each table, one conducting with the aid of a stopwatch, the other striking or rubbing the bowls as Finer's graphic score dictates. For this debut in the bell-like, high-ceilinged expanse of North London's Roundhouse venue, the teams include improvisors such as Steve Beresford, Kaffe Mathews and *The Wire* contributor David Toop – straight-faced and sombre in matching grey polyester uniforms like some radical revolutionary cadre – each performing for a few minutes before being replaced, as if in a closely choreographed tag-team event. Although this performance is only scheduled to run for a relatively brief 1000 minutes – from early Saturday morning until the small hours of Sunday – the rising tones, sparse chimes and throbbing bongs of the singing bowls still manage to impart a sense of the project's grand scale. It's easy to imagine this lingering, elongated, astral gamelan being used as a means of interstellar communication.

And ultimately, it brings a message of hope. Despite all of the threats to humanity's continued existence, despite the human race's maddening, self-destructive folly, *Longplayer* seems to suggest that, a millennium from now, there will still be people prepared to lose themselves in the rippling resonances of lightly struck bronze.

Daniel Spicer

Max Eastley/Victor Gama

Kings Place, London, UK

Brian Eno once told a cautionary tale that a contact at one of the major digital instrument companies had in turn related to him: when buyers brought in their synths, drum machines and the like to be serviced, the company's engineers were dismayed to find that only a minute proportion of said buyers had modified the presets of their machines in any way. Most hadn't bothered to touch them. Which is a long-winded way of saying that, given the infinite possibilities offered up by the digital age, an aspect of imagination in the musicians had been closed down. They preferred to express their own music via another person's sonic language.

While Eno didn't have to say which side he was on, there is nothing inherently wrong with those who choose not to twiddle with their presets, or, for that matter, pre-existing instruments. The manipulation of pre-existing sounds will yield great poetry, but there is an argument to be made for recognising the instrument builders themselves as the real pioneers of sound. This was the premise for a dedicated evening of short concerts for New And Rediscovered Musical Instruments (the title of Max Eastley's 1975 collaboration with David Toop on Eno's Obscure label).

Max Eastley opened things up with an unobtrusive solo for his arc. This is an electroacoustic monochord, an instrument that looks like a ski with a string. Eastley bows and finger-stops the ark, generating waves of multilayered sounds. Its timbres range from high to low and hard to soft, with sudden endings, scratchings and sawings, and there's a point where the string is percussed by what looks like a metal chopstick. After about half an hour, Eastley is controlling the fallout of a whirl of harmonic clusters, and the resonance created is always a rich one. His history as an improvisor is a long one, during which he has created many new instruments to express himself.

In Portuguese composer and instrument builder Victor Gama's work, sound and its production are inseparable. To this end, his longstanding project *Pangeia Instrumentos* has involved making instruments, and exploring new electroacoustic modalities, notational and even belief systems. For Gama, music is embedded within a wider culture and needs to reflect as much. That's not to say that his music is too encumbered to be responsive.

As this evening's improvised *Accrux Creation* demonstrates (Gama is joined on laptop by digital artist and sometime collaborator David Gunn), dialoguing – his term – is the key. The accrux, one of Gama's Pangeia-invented instruments, is an extraordinary object: something like a small kettledrum acting as a resonator, with four spindles loaded with metal discs which can be strummed or plucked. Seated, he quickly loops some of the accrux's sounds, building up a mesh of tones. Ghostly clangings and delicate marimba-like patterns ensue while Gunn and Gama feed excerpts back and forth, each one modulating, refining and transforming what came before.

As with Eastley's arc, the accrux comes without pre-ordained rules of engagement, and much of the listening pleasure comes from the wit and exuberance that its inventor brings to it.

Lenise Gray

Warp 20

Various venues, Sheffield, UK

Park Hill Flats, Sheffield's answers to Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation, looms above town like a monument to a forgotten future. Four miles away, The Tamplaborough Steel Works glowers, its smokeless chimneys now industrial cenotaphs. Warp have chosen these venues to celebrate their 20th birthday, and although both buildings fit in with the label's urban aesthetic, one worries if their failures as modern projects are being fetishised. But then the work starts to appear – Warp films unfurling against towering concrete, and music juddering through metal joists, showing us how great art can flourish in the most peculiar places.

At Park Hill Flats, as the sun sets, we watch pop promos and short films. Aphex Twin's incredible track "Come To Daddy" still pinpoints the terror inherent in brutalist buildings that their architects, and their defenders, always ignore. Shana Meadows's *The Living Room*, a film about Clayhill's Gavin Clark going solo, becomes a heartbreaking account of struggle and survival, and a documentary about the All Tomorrow's Parties festivals shows another architectural utopia – the great British holiday camp – in a much more upbeat light. Coachas then transport us to the steelworks for a prosaic touch of Sheffield's no-nonsense soul. Now a science and adventure centre by day, it has been transformed for one night into an Acid-era industrial space.

This is the sound of Warp 1989, not 2009, and even the more recent acts on the bill extract life from this seed. Mark Pritchard's Harmonic 313 expertly revives the ghosts of Detroit Techno. Clark mesmerises by messing with Aphex Twin's early Pac-Man mixes, while Hudson Mohawke's hypercoloured pop draws breath from the excesses of 90s soul. The older acts also look back to their early years. Nightmares On Wax work best, pivoting their vivid set around the emergence of the sound we once called Northern Bleep – splicing "Dextrous" and "Aftermath" around A Guy Called Gerald's "Voodoo Ray" and shouting "*It's Old School! Say Yorkshire!*" when their power briefly cuts. Squarepusher provides the event's only sour note by spoiling his intricate rhythms with bass slapping that makes him sound like a teenager auditioning for *Sainfeld*.

The night ends well and warmly. Andrew Weatherall brings House classics by Hercules and Frankie Knuckles out of the shadows, with The Forgemasters playing "Track With No Name" – Warp's first ever 12" – as the day breaks. Rather than providing a night of innovation, Warp have shown that they are proud of their roots, justifiably.

Jude Rodgers

Christopher Tribble

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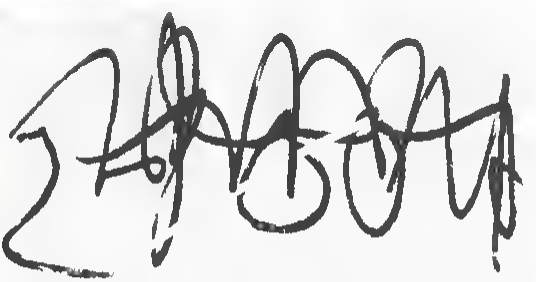

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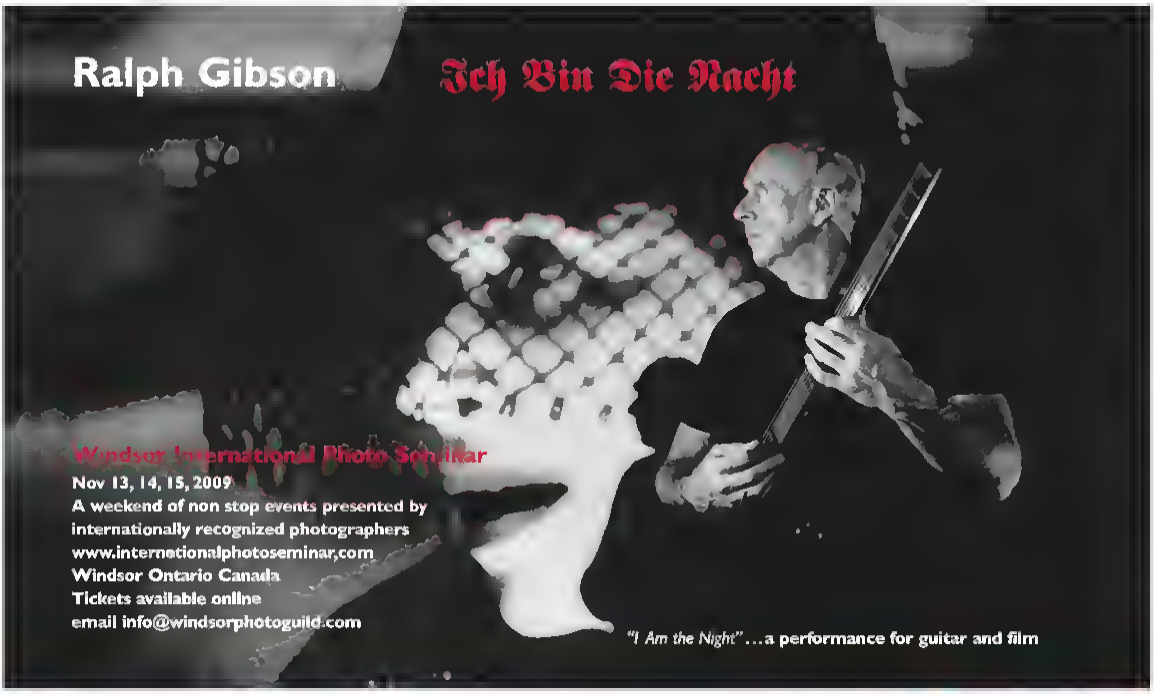
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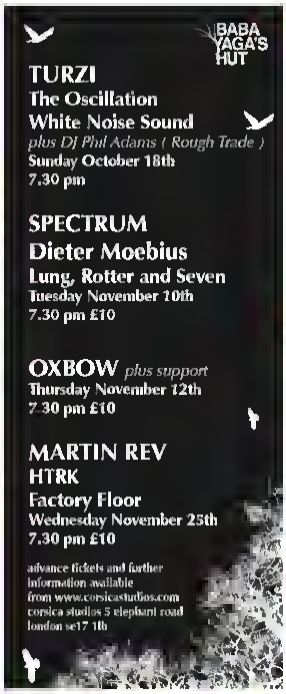

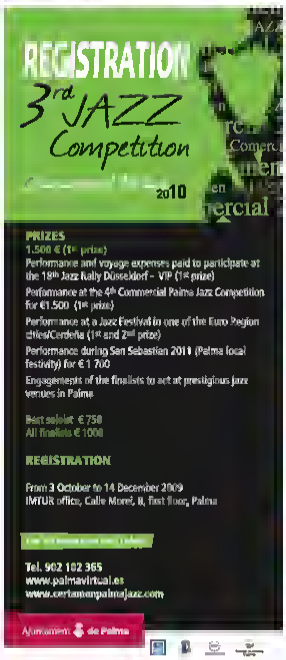

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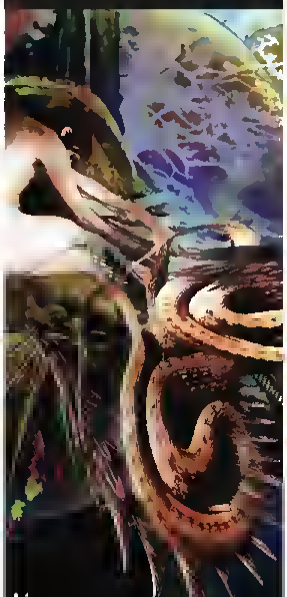

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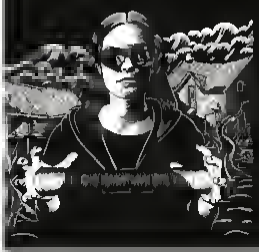

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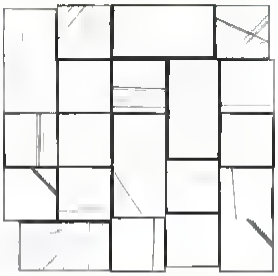

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shifting currents

sound

north east scotland e festival of new music

28th Oct - 22nd N
2009

19.11.09
Cowdray Hall, Aberdeen, 8pm
As part of sound 2009

15.11.09
's-Hertogenbosch 5.30pm.
As part of November Music, The Netherlands

23.11.09
Bates Mill, Huddersfield, 10pm.
As part of hcmf// 2009

A new commission of m c for three musicians by Bi ompson with Keith Rowe, Rick Rees & Bill Thomp
for sound 2009 www.s nd-scotla co.uk
Huddersfield Contem rary Mu c Festival 2009 w w hcmf.co uk
& Le Weekend Festival 2 0 www.leweekendfestival.com

hcmf// Music Weekend 2009 TOLBOOTH Esmée Fairbairn

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"I've done several shows with SBJ, and can say, without exaggeration, that he is a magician. He connects with his audience and is a dramatic and deep player, and he manages to include his experimental side in his sets in ways that are organic and absorbing..." Glenn Jones

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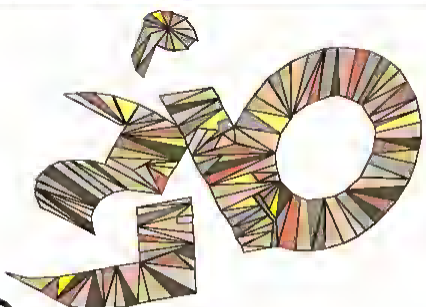

GIO FESTIVAL II

Two days of improvised and other music featuring the Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra, Axel Dörner, Susan Alcorn, Pyramidion, Arild Vange, Filario Farinoppo, Yoko Miura, Raymond MacDonald/Valhalla + more.

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Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events and clubs. Compiled by **Lisa Blanning**

UK Festivals

Calling Out Of Context London
Nine days of experimental music supported by *The Wire*, featuring a series of performances and workshops that draw on a crossover ethos and intend to express the vitality of the sonic avant garde. With AGF, Mira Calix, The Red Krayola, Gravetemple, Rhys Chatham, Aaron Dilloway, Seb Rochford, 91, Lucky Dragons and more, plus new sound works by Jen St Werner and Nina Canell & Robin Watkins and a concluding weekend dedicated to Cornelius Cardew featuring contributions from John Tilbury, Grant Watson and Ultra-red. London ICA, 14–22 November. ica.org.uk

Colour Out Of Space Brighton
Chocolate Monk's annual experimental music and film festival featuring Trevor Wishart, Bill Drcutt & Paul Hession, Ju Suk Reat Meate & Dblivia, Joseph Hammer, Leif Elggren & CM Von Hausswolff, Kodama Tomutonttu, Nuslux, Heavy Seals, Kommissar Hjuler & Mama Baer, Chora, Mechanical Children, Justice Yeldman, Sten Hanson and more, plus panel discussions, workshops and an art exhibition. Brighton Sallis Benney Theatre, 30 October–1 November. £30 festival pass, colouroutofspace.org

GIO II Glasgow
Two days of music with hosts Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra plus Axel Dörner, Susan Alcorn, Pyramidian, Arild Vange, Filario Fennoppo, Yoko Miura, Raymond MacDonald & Valhalla and more. Glasgow CCA, 6–7 November, £5/day, cca-glasgow.com

Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival Huddersfield
Celebrating new and experimental music with the longrunning UK festival, sponsored by *The Wire*, this year with composer in residence Jonathan Harvey and appearances by MEV, Arditti Quartet and more, plus a programme of Anthony Braxton's compositions, Louis Andriessen's 70th birthday concerts, works by Wolfgang Rihm, Emmanuel Nunes and more. Huddersfield various venues, 18–29 November, hcmf.co.uk

London International Festival Of Exploratory Music London
New festival supported by *The Wire* with performances by Jenni Roditi, Andrew Poppy, Nive Nielsen, Tanya Tagaq, Lorcán Mac Mathúna, Tri A Tolia, Lonely China Day, Mebrouk Band, Shira Utfila, Gukunft Coletivo, Rádio Cipó, Madame Mim and more. Plus an extensive programme of film screenings featuring work from Thomas Köner, Frank Bretschneider, Mark Fell, Pita, Sue Costabile, Cosey Fanni Tutti and more. London King's Place, 4–7 November. lifem.org.uk

London Jazz Festival London
The capital's ten day celebration of jazz hosts Sonny Rollins, Carla Bley, Gilberto Gil, Dave Holland, John Surman, John Scofield and more. London various venues, 13–22 November, londonjazzfestival.org.uk

International Festivals

AKOUSMA Canada
Immersive concerts and live electronics with works by Luc Ferrari plus performances by BJ Nilsen, eRikm, Yoko Higashi, Lionel Marchetti and more. Montréal Monnment-National, 18–22 November. reseauxconcerts.com

All Frontiers Italy
Contemporary music festival featuring Han Bennink & Terrie Ex, Keith Tippett, Anthony Coleman, K Space, MMM Quartet (featuring Alvin Curran & Fred Frith) and more. Gradisca d'Isonzo various venues, 10–22 November, moremusic.it

Club To Club Italy/Belgium
Torino's festival of electronic music and arts this year twins with Brussels to celebrate the 'State Of Independance' with Carl Craig, Jeff Mills, Moritz von Oswald, Laurent Garnier, Alexander Balanescu, Blixa Bargeld, Marcel Dettmann, Shed, Tim Exile, Hudson Mohawke, Martyn, Optimo, Filastine, Donan Concept and more. Torino and Brnssels various venues, 5–7 November, clubtoclub.it

Dis-Patch Serbia
Eighth edition of the music and art festival, this year sponsored by *The Wire*, taking place over three weekends and incorporating concerts, installations, workshops, guided tours, films and more. Artist in focus Vladislav Delay presents a new installation work as well as five performances and a collaboration with video artist Lillevän. Plus Pan Sonic, Kode9 & The Spaceape, Byetone, AM/PM, Kim Hiorthøy, T++ and more. Belgrade various venues, 23 October–5 November. dis-patch.com

A Fantastic World Superimposed On Reality: A Select History of Experimental Music USA
A noise festival sponsored by *The Wire* and curated by artist and former member of Destroy All Monsters Mike Kelley. Works and performances from Airway, Joen La Barbara, John Cage, Rhys Chatham, Tony Conrad, Destroy All Monsters, Extended Organ, Fred Frith, Hair Stylistics, Arto Lindsay, Bruce Nauman, Max Neuhaus, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Yoko Ono, Stockhausen, z'ev, and John Zorn. New York The Gramercy Theatre, 20 & 21 November. $50/$40 festival pass, $30/$25 day, performa-arts.org

Fri Hesonens Norway
Three days of Improv with Keith Rowe & Kjell Bjørgeengen, Michel Doneda & Le Quan Ninh, Time Art Ensemble, Stefano Scodanibio, John Tilbury/Rhodri Davies/Michael Duch, Magda Mayas and more. Trondheim Dokkhuset & Kunstmuseum Gråmølne, 13–15 November. free-resonance.org

Ihr Habt Es Nich Anders Gewollt Germany
Translating as You Did Not Want It Differently, this two day event revisits the underground scene of the former German Democratic Republic with Herr Blum, Herbst In Peking, Die Art, Drnament & Verbrechen, Pffft... and more, plus lectures, films and discussions. Leipzig Centraltheater, 17–18 November. centraltheater-leipzig.de

In-Edit Beefeater Spain
Seventh edition of this film festival devoted to music documentaries, this year sponsored by *The Wire*, with round table discussions, master classes and a programme featuring *Johnny Cash At Folsom Prison*, *Soul Power*, *Sunny's Time Now*, *Beyond Ipanema*, *Suffering And Smiling* and more. Barcelona various venues, 29 October–8 November, in-edit.beefeater.es

Jazzdor France
Longrunning festival with more than 30 concerts featuring Cecil Taylor & Tony Oxley, Luc Ex, Veryen Weston, Alex Bonney & Dave Kane, Matthew Bonrne, Berre Philips, Roger Turner, Vincent Courtois, Zakarya, To Catch A Crab, Tim Berne and more. Strasbourg various venues, 6–20 November. jazzdor.com

MEM Spain
A month long celebration of electronic and extreme music with performance from choreographer Yann Marussich, an experimental film workshop with Collectif Negatif, exhibitions plus music from KTL, Damo Suzuki, Dead Letters, Tsunami Killcore, Violet Baseline, Ho-Ag and more. Bilbao various venues, 30 October–5 December. musicaexmachina.com

Ho No Logic Spain
Small festival and indie label meet-up with performances by Cristian Vogel, Man From Uranus, Patric Catani, Tronble Versus Glue, Les Anciens and more, plus a series of short films and interactive installations. Barcelona various venues, 27–29 November. nonologic.com

November Music Netherlands
Contemporary music with commissioned works from festival composer Martijn Padding, plus premieres from Wilbert Bulsink & Thomas Myrmel. Rasheed Al-Bougaily and more, plus performances from Michael Nyman & alva noto, Janek Schaefer, Marko Ciciliani/Terre Thaemitz/Bakin Zub, Mouse On Mars, Daniel Johnston & BEAM and more, plus talks, films and installations. 's-Hertogenbosch various venues, 11–15 November, novembermusic.net

Performe USA
Third edition of the visual art performance biennial includes a music section featuring Arto Lindsay's 'arts parade' *Somewhere I Read* (1 November). A Fantastic World Superimposed On Reality (see International Festivals, 20–21) and Music For 16 Futurist Noise Intoners (with Blixa Bargeld, John Butcher, Pauline Oliveros, Mike Patton, Elliott Sharp, Jennifer Welsche & Tony Conrad and more, 12). New York various venues, 1–22 November. performa-arts.org

Plateaux Poland
Multimedia art, experimental films and electronic music with snd, Christopher Willits, Deaf Center & Claudio Sinatti, Morgan Packard, Richerd Devine, James T Cotton, Ezekiel Honig, Lusine and more, plus projects and installations by Atom™, Fennesz & Lillevan, Akufen, Lawrence English & Makino Takashi and more. Toruń and Bydgoszcz various venues, 19–22 November, plateauxfestival.pl

Saint Ghetto Switzerland
Annual event in an old riverside factory building. With Ghedelle Tazartes & Les Reines D'Angleterre, Baby Dee, Big Sexy Noise, Die Goldenen Zitronen, Little Annie, André Duracell, Philippe Petit and Cobra Killer. Bern Dampfzentrale, 27–29 November, dampfzentrale.ch

SOUNDpley Canada
Month-long festival for sound art and new media with interactive installations, screenings and workshops. The closing event features a performance by Debashis Sinha & Yasuhiro Morinaga (7 November, 8pm, $15/$10). Toronto various venues, to 7 November, naisa.ca

Umbrella USA
Jazz and improvised music from Chicago and beyond, with Akira Sekata, Joe McPhee, Matthew Shipp, Guus Janssen, Hans Koch, Ken Vandermark, Jeff Parker, Wilbert de Joode, Chris Corsano, Fred Lonberg-Holm, Kent Kessler, Martin Brandlmayr, Greg Ward, Frank Rosaly, Jeb Bishop and more. Chicago various venues, 5–8 November. umbrellamusic.org

Unlimited 23 Austria
Long-running festival of improvisation this year curated by Ikue Mori. Artists include Mori, The Ex, Lee Ranaldo, KTL, Zeena Parkins, Sylvie Courvoisier, Phil Minton, Fred Frith & Chris Cutler, Peter Evans & Okkyung Lee and Maja Ratkje. Weis various venues, 6–8 November. musicunlimited.at

Worldtronics Germany
A loose examination of the global phenomenon of pop music, with events over

four nights including the world premiere of Lappetites' multimedia laptopera *Fathers*, the Berlin/Istanbul connection as curated by Einsturzende Neubauten's Alexander Hacke synth pop from Asie end Cumbie music Berlin Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 25–28 November hkw.de

Special Events

John Cage Spain
An extensive exhibition devoted to Cage with sound recordings films scores and documentary meteriels plus e concert performed by Melcolm Goldstein end Matthies Kaul Barcelona Museo d Art Contemporenl, 23 October–10 January (concert 29 October) macba.cat

Cornelius Cardew Play For Today UK
Exhibition paying tribute to the experimental British composer end the activities of The Scratch Orchestra including scores, orig inal menuscripts Scratch books and other archival material Plus screenings talks and a symposium London The Drawing Room 5 November–13 December drawingroom.org.uk

Cornelius Cardew And The Freedom Of Listening Germany
Another chance to see the Cardew exhibition shown earlier this year In France with archive meterial photographs scores, sound recordings end films plus e series of concerts retracing the career of the English composer November events include performances from Keith Rowe (5 November) Ekkehard Ehlers (7) and various artists in a weekend satellite event (21 & 22), Stuttgart Künstlerhaus to 29 November, kuenstlerhaus.de/de/vorschau

Jacqueline Caux + Gevin Bryers France
An evening dedicated to the musicologist essayist and radio personality Daniel Caux who died in 2008 with a screening of wife Jacqueline Caux s film *Les Couleurs Du Prisme*, *La Mecanique Du Temps* (*De John Cage À la Techno*) followed by a solo pieno recital by the British composer Paris Centre Pompidou, 9 November 8 3Dpm €1D, centrepompidou.fr

Digital Developments UK
Weekend workshops offering lessons in e variety of creative uses of media Found Sound Stories (with tutor Janek Schaefer, 24 & 25 October) Using Sensors For Performance And Installation (7 & 8 November) Experimentel Digital Printmaking (21 & 22) Circuit Bending Atari Punk Console (28 & 29) Brecknell South Hill Park Digital Media Centre, £13B–£114/weekend, digitalmediacentre.org

Faster Then Sound: Listen UK
Following The Suffolk Symphony Faster Than Sound s series of events supported by *The Wire* in East Suffolk hosts a night curated by Russell Haswell featuring e collaboration between field recordists Bernie Krause and Chris Watson with surround recording and diffusion by Tony Myatt Snape Hoffmen Buildings, 7 November 8pm £1D, fasterthansound.com

Heptic & Lise Slodki USA
Flingco Sound System recording artists collaborate with the video artist on e multimedia installation based on source material from four live audio visual performances Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, 6–29 November (performances 6 1D, 17 24) mca chicago.org

Tim Hill UK
The saxophonist presents a weekend of sound events inspired by locations in Reading which includes solo performance, collaboration with sound artist Jonathen Coleclough, e group performance by Tongues Of Fire and a talk Reading various venues, 12–14 November times/prices vary, tongues-of-fire.co.uk

Hevikodden Live Norway
An exhibition combined with a series of performances on the concept of live' Static art and/or live performances from Jaap Blonk, Stephen O Malley Merzbow Noxagt, Susanna, Camille Norment, Maja Ratkje Pierre Huyghe and more Oslo Henie Onstad Art Centre to 8 November hok.no

Ryoji Ikeda UK
Solo exhibit of the installation *data tron*, plus a live performance of the Japanese composer and artist s *dotomatics [ver 2 0]* Exh-bit B rmingham Ikon Easts de, 15 October–8 November Performance Birmingham CBSO Centre, 24 November, 8 45pm £1D–£5 ikon-gallery.co.uk

Cameron Jamie Greece
Exhibition entitled Berking Tanof new ink works from the film maker and artist Athens Bernier/Eliades Gellery, to 13 November

Jacob Kirkegaard UK
The Oenish sound artist presents and discusses his *Aion* project followed by a live performance of *Labyrinthitis* Bristol Arnolfini 7 November 2pm (presentation £3) 7 3Dpm (performance £6/£5) arnolfini.org.uk

Hoh Heyashi Kete UK
Traditional Japanese musical drame presented by master performer Akira Matsui dancing with UK besed mus cians and performers including Gabriel Prokofiev Teigen Kawebe Team B and Kei Suzuki The performance costumes will be produced by Kumiko Tani end other attractions include traditional food and a display of kimonos London Cafe Oto, 29 November, 7pm, £12 50/£9 50 cafeoto.co.uk

Susan Philipsz UK
The Berlin based artist/vocalist presents a site-specific installation Oxford Radcliffe Observetory 31 October–3 December. modernartoxford.org.uk

Reconstructing Song Germany
Fourth year for the concert series exploring different notions of song as narrative With Joan La Barbara and Sudden Infant (3 November) Kishino Yuichi, DJ Shabushabu Maho Thai Disco, Gorutaichi Obukejae (10), Ekkehard Ehlers & Paul Wirkus Ron Winkler, Noel Akchoté (3 December) Cologne Stadtgarten z e m eu/ ReconstructingSong.html

Reinventing The Dial: Explorations In Experimental Radio Practice UK
A day long symposium between students practitioners and academics on radio art and experimental radio with speakers Peter Cusack Keffe Matthews Angus Carlyle Tom McCarthy and more Canterbury Christ Church University 27 October, 10am, canterbury.ac.uk/media

Risonanze Italy
Concert series continues in Venice with Berlin Night celebrating the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall featuring a screening of Jürgen Bottcher's 1990 film *Die Mauer* plus DJ sets from Gudrun Gut end Thomas Fehlmenn Venice Teatro Fondamenta Nuove, 15 November, teatrofondamentanuove.it

San Servolo Jazz Meeting Italy
Four concerts exploring different facets of contemporary jazz on the small island in the Venetian Lagoon With Michael Blake/Ben Allison/Hamid Drake (5 November) Franco D Andrea (12) Ken Vandermark & Peal Nilssen-Love (21) Tinissima (26) Venice San Servolo, teatrofondamentanuove.it

The Stroh Instruments UK
An exhibition curated by Aleks Kolkowski centred on the horn-amplified violin and its inventor Augustus Stroh With a closing performance by Aleks Kolkowski on stroh violin with Richard Cole on pianola (14 November 2 30pm) Brentford The Musical Museum to 14 November £8/£6 5D musicalmuseum.co.uk

On Stage

Steffen Basho-Junghens
Germen guitarist end disciple of Robbie Basho London Cafe Oto (5 November), Sheffield The Shekespeare (6) Manchester tbe (7), Leeds The Victoria Hotel (8) Preston The Continental (9) Nottingham Chameleon (10), Cambridge CB2 (11)

Burkhard Beins & Rhodri Davies
Germen percussionist meets the UK harpist Newcastle Morden Tower (with Adam Parkinson & Meriem Rezael, 3 November) Scarborough University of Hull Scarborough Campus Performance Space PS2 (4)

Chris Corsano
Solo performance from the prolific drummer plus support from Martin Byrne Belfast Sonic Arts Research Centre, 14 November, 8pm £8/£5

Vladislav Delay
Sasu Ripetti s alter ego performs live on electronics and percuss on with reeds player Lucio Capece, plus support from jazz outfit Food London Union Chapel 12 November 7pm £15

Duology + 2
The American trumpet and clarinet duo of Ted Daniel and Michael Marcus join forces with UK players John Jaanoch and Charlie Collins Liverpool The Everyman Bistro (6 November), Leeds 7 Arts (10), Newcastle The Bridge Hotel (11) Sheffield Bar Abbey (12) London Cafe Oto (13)

Espers + The Cave Singers + Weeds
Alt folk and rock from three American outfits London Rough Trade East (instore, 8 November), Centarbury The Farmhouse (9) Birmingham Hare & Hounds (10), Dublin Crewdaddy (11) Belfast Speakeasy (12), Glasgow Stereo (13) Edinburgh The Electric Circus (14), Newcastle The Cluny (15), Leeds Brudenell Social Club (16) Manchester Academy 3 (17) Bristol Fleece (19) London ULU (20)

Fennesz
A lone date for the Viennese laptop and guitar improvisor, plus support from Grouper and Natural Snow Buildings London St Giles-In-The-Fields, 3 November, 7pm, £13 5D

Foot Village
Drums and voices troupe from Los Angeles London Bardens Boudoir (6 November)

Brighton Freebutt (7), Cardiff Buffalo Bar (8), Manchester Trof (9), Glasgow CCA (10), Newcastle Head Of Steam (12), Leeds British Wildlife (12), Liverpool St Luke's (13)

Josephine Foster & Victor Herrera
Album launch event for the American singer-songwriter and her Spanish collaborator. London Cafe Oto, 14 November. 8pm. £8

Gong
The Anglo-French veterans' 40th anniversary sees the return of core members Daevid Allen, Steve Hillage, Gilli Smyth and others. Bristol Academy (19 November), Exeter The Lemon Grove (20), Manchester Academy 2 (21), Edinburgh Picturehouse (22), Sheffield Leadmill (23), Leamington Spa Assembly (25), Cambridge Corn Exchange (26), London Forum (27), Oxford Regal Theatre (28), Brighton Corn Exchange (29)

Grizzly Bear
21st century backwoods pop. Dublin Vicar Street (1 November), Glasgow ABC (2), Manchester Cathedral (4), Leeds Metropolitan University (5), Bristol Anson Rooms (6)

Grouper
Portland, Oregon's Liz Harris presents her tape-collages of otherworldly sound. Dublin Filmbase (with John Wiese, 30 October), Glasgow Stereo (1 November), London St Giles Church (with Fennesz, 3), Cambridge Portland Arms (4), London Luminaire (with Thank You, 5), Manchester Nexus Art Cafe (with Jasper TX, 6)

Heir Police + Family Battle Snake
Noise rock connoisseurs and spectral drone. Bristol The Croft (15 November), London Old Blue Last (16), Cambridge Man On The Moon (17), Leeds Brudenall Social Club (with Astral Social Club, 18), Glasgow Stereo (19), Dublin Whelans (HP only, 20), Edinburgh Stills Gallery (FBS only, 20), Newcastle The Telegraph (FBS only with Jazzfinger, 21)

Hewkwind + The Amorpheus Andregyneus + Camus
Late night psych revival at a swanky nightclub, plus additional support from The Yellow Moon Band, Nick Nicely's Unlived Lives, Alisha Sufit and Cranium Pie as well as DJs and projections. London Matter, 30 October, 9pm, £25

Kanako Horiuchi
Idiosyncratic mix of Okinawa folk music, J-pop and ska. London Cafe Oto, 15 November, 8pm, £5

Daniel Johnston
Another tour from the cult American singer-songwriter. London Bloomsbury Ballroom (31 October), Brighton Concorde 2 (1 November), London Union Chapel (2), Manchester Town Hall (3), Edinburgh Queens Hall (4), Gateshead The Sage (5), Leeds Brudenell Social Club (6), Leeds Brudenell Social Club (7), Bristol Trinity Arts Centre (8)

Katsuyoshi Kou/Loi Coxhill/Steve Noble/John Edwards
The Korean guitarist is joined by UK improvisors. London Cafe Oto, 23 November, 8pm, £6

Tori & Reiko Kudo
Solo performance from each of the Maher Shalal Hash Baz couple on consecutive evenings. London Cafe Oto, 6 (Tori) & 7 (Reiko) November, 8pm, £10/£8

Ingrid Laubrock's Sleepthief
German saxophonist with pianist Liam Noble and drummer Tom Rainey. Manchester Cross Street Chapel (17 November), London Vortex (22), Southampton University (23), London The Oxford (24)

The Legendary Pink Dots
Veteran Anglo-Dutch psychonauts. Pins support from The Oscillation. London Bardens Boudoir, 15 November, £10

Lukas Ligeti
Live solo performance from the composer-percussionist and son of György. Oxford Holywell Music Room (13 November), Bristol Arnolfini (14), London Purcell Room (16), Edinburgh Inspace (17)

Little Annie & Paul Wallfisch
Long-term neo-cabaret collaborators preview material from their upcoming album *Ganderfui*. London Bush Hall, 23 November, 7.30pm, £10

Toshiji Mikawa
A rare solo set from Incapacitants/Hijokaidan founding member Toshiji Mikawa heads a line-up including the first UK performance from post-New Blockaders unit Nihilist Assault Group. Romance/Putrefier, John Wiese and BBBlood. London The Grosvenor, 6 November, 8pm, £10

The Night Of The Long Worms
New cassette-only label Tapeworm presents a line-up featuring Leif Elgren, Joachim Nordwall, Baraclough, Philip Jeck, Meltnot, Souls On Board (with Bruce Gilbert), Simon Fisher Turner and more. London Cafe Oto, 19 November, 8pm, £8/£6

Ojos De Brujo
Anarchic Spanish ensemble plus support from La Trobe Kung-Fu. Gateshead Sage (21 November), Bristol Colston Hall (22), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (27), Basingstoke The Anvil (28), Brighton Dome (29), Edinburgh Usher Hall (30), Leicester De Montford Hall (1 December)

Oxbow
Ass-whupping experimental rock. Brighton The Engine Room (9 November), Manchester Star & Garter (10), Birmingham Vivid (11), London Corsica Studios (12)

Dominique Pifarely
The French violinist is joined by Tim Berne, Bruno Chevillon and Craig Taborn. London Vortex, 2 November, 8pm

Polar Bear
The British jazz outfit are the latest addition to The Leaf Label. Birmingham The Glee Club (25 October), Barnstaple Broomhill Sculpture Park (18 November), Exeter The Phoenix (19), London Jazz Cafe (20), Manchester Band On The Wall (24), Leeds Howard Assembly Room (27), Bexhill-On-Sea De La Warr Pavilion (28), Bristol Colston Hall (29)

Profound Sound Trio
The heavyweight rhythm section of Andrew Cyrille and Henry Grimes plus UK saxophonist Paul Dunmall. Belfast Sonic Arts Research Centre (20 November), Leeds Seven Arts (22), London Vortex (23), Manchester Band On The Wall (with Polar Bear, 24), Gateshead Old Town Hall (26), Derby Theatre Studio (27), Birmingham CBSO (28)

Psychic TV (PTV3)
Genesis P-orridge and friends plus support from Piano Magic. London The Tabernacle, 3 November, 7.30pm, £14

Hugo Race
Ex-Bad Seed and Nick Cave collaborator. London Cross Kings, 7 November, 8pm, £8/£6

Martin Rev
One half of Suicide plus support from HTRK and Factory Floor. London Corsica Studios, 25 November, £10

Jack Rose & The Black Twig Pickers
Former Pelt guitarist and his fingerpicking accomplices. Brighton Komedia (2 November), London Cafe Oto (with C Joynes, 3), Falmouth Miss Peapods (4), Bristol The Cube (5), Gateshead The Sage (with Ceth & Phil Tyler, 6), Glasgow Stereo (7), London Cecil Sharp House (with Peter Knight & Trevor Watts, Tom James Scott, 8)

The Royal Ballet
A night of three short works, including Wayne McGregor's *A World Premiere* (music by Kaija Saariaho). London Royal Opera House, 4–18 November, 7.30pm, £55–£4

Ryuichi Sakamoto
UK leg of the Japanese composer and pianist's European tour. Birmingham Sun Symphony Hall (22 November), Manchester Bridgewater Hall (24), Brighton Dome (27), London Cadogan Hall (29 & 30), Edinburgh Queens Hall (2 December)

Spectrum + Dieter Moebius + Lung, Rutter And Savan
Triple bill of Pete Sonic Boom Kember, half of Cluster and a new trio comprising Two Lone Swordsman collaborators and ex-Add N to (X) man Barry Seven. London Corsica Studios, 10 November, 7.30pm, £10

Martin Speicher/Mark Sanders/John Edwards
German reeds player joins the UK free jazz rhythm section. Birmingham Lamp Tavern (17 November), London Cafe Oto (with Pat Thomas, 18)

***The Wire* presents Adventures In Modern Music**
Resonance 104.4 FM

The Wire's weekly show on the UK's only community arts radio station is broadcast across Central London on 104.4 FM every Thursday between 9–10.30pm, with simultaneous streaming at resonancefm.com. All editions of the show, complete with guest mixes, are archived at thewire.co.uk a few days after their initial broadcast.

WIRE
Resonance104.4**fm**

Staff Benda Bilili
Congolese street ensemble make their first UK appearances following debut album *Tres Tres Fort*. London Barbican (10 November), Brighton Dome (11), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (12), Manchester RNCM (14), Milton Keynes Stables Theatre (15), Gateshead The Sage (16), Edinburgh Usher Hall (17), Bristol Fiddlers Club (18), Oxford Academy (20)

Rachid Taha
The French-Algerian superstar presents his new album *Bonjour*. Plus support from Vieux Farka Toure. London Royal Festival Hall, 13 November, 7.30pm, £25–£20

Tickley Feather
Pew Tracks released lo-fi pop from Annie Sachs. Brighton The Lectern (14 November), Manchester Retro Bar (15), Glasgow V Club (16), Belfest Menagerie Bar (17), Dublin Whelans (18), Cardiff Buffalo Bar (20), London Cafe Oto (21)

TOM-MIX
Sax, bass and drums trio of Mark Hanslip, Ollie Brice and Tony Marsh. London The Oxford (3 November), London Ryan's (18)

Tortoise + Cluster
The only UK performance during the Chicago post-rockers' European tour, plus Krautrock legends in support. London Royal Festival Hall, 22 November, 7.30pm, £20–£17.50

Lowrence Upton At 60
An evening of performances in honour of the poet and graphic artist. With Upton, Tine Bass, John Levack Drever, Chris Goode and Mike McInerney. London Goldsmiths Great Hall, 14 November, 7pm, free

White Noise + Mark Jenkins
Pioneering British sci-fi pop outfit currently comprising David Vorhaus and Mark Jenkins perform *An Electric Storm In Space*, a new performance of White Noise material mixed with astronomical sound sources. Plus a screening of the film *Supernova* with music by Mark Jenkins. London Royal Observatory Greenwich Peter Harrison Planetarium, 28 November, 6.45pm & 9.15pm, £18

Wilco
Alt Americana. Leeds Academy (3 November), London Forum (4)

World Sanguine Report
Experimental jazz, skronk and song. London Purcell Room (14 November), Newcastle Cluny (24), Manchester Islington Mill (25), Leeds Sant ago (26), Birmingham Yardbird (3 December), Bristol Arnolfini (18)

Wrasse 15th Anniversary
Birthday blitz for the record label with Con-Dom, The Grey Wolves, Ashtray Navigations, Putrefier, Slogun, Sickness, Control, Iron Fist Of The Sun, Lash Frenzy vs Mort The Sonic, Cities Prepare for Attack and more. Birmingham Wagon & Horses, 28 November, 8pm, £10

Yo La Tengo
Longserving US alternative rock institution touring their enthrallingly titled *Popular Songs*. Dublin Tripod (5 November), Glasgow ABC (6), Manchester Academy 2 (7), London Roundhouse (8)

James Yorkston & The Big Eyes Family Players
Plus support from Mary Hampton & David A Jaycock. Reading South Street Arts Centre (5 November), London Tabernacle (7), Brighton Hanbury Club (8)

Club Spaces

Bleck Sun
Monthly leftfield music with Smegma s Oblivia & Ju Suk Reet Meate, Jozef van Wissem and Laura Sheeran. Cork Granary Theatre, 7 November, 8pm. myspace com/solmigenre

Boat-Ting
Regular improv and poetry club on a boat on the Thames with Lol Coxhill & Alex Ward, Mark Sanders/John Edwards/Jonny Merks, Steve Beresford/Alan Tomlinson/Roger Turner (2 November), Steve Noble, Vole, Chris Cundy/Stephen Flinn/Nicky Heinen/Ute Kanngiesser, The Sibylline Sisters (16). London Bar & Co, every first and third Monday, 8pm, £6/£4. 020 8659 3406. boat-ting com

The Cutting Edge
Sound And Music s weekly performance series focusing on contemporary composers. With Philip Thomas (5 November), Jane Chapman & Gregoire Meyer (12), Sights & Sounds (14, 1pm, 4.30pm, 8pm), Okeanos & [rout] (19), Christopher Redgate & Ensemble Expose (26, 7pm), Stephen Gutman (26, 8.30pm), BackBeat Percussion Quartet (3 December), London The Warehouse, 7.30pm, £10/£7 (£55/series pass) soundandmusic org

Derkstar
Regular night presented by Slowfoot Records, this time featuring Robert Logan, Grasscut and P45, plus DJs. London Dogstar, 26 November (last Thursday monthly), £7/£5, slowfoot co uk

FIZZLE
Regular improv night with the Mahood duo of Walt Shew & Graham Fostar (3 November), Martin Speicher/Mark Sanders/John Edwards (17). Birmingham The Lamp Tavern, 8.45pm, £5/£3, myspace com/improvisationbirmingham

Flim Flam
Alan Wilkinson's regular improv nights with Alan Wilkinson/Jerry Bird/Robin Musgrove and TOM-MIX (18 November), Jim Dvorak/Neil Metcalfe/Marcio Mattos/Dave Fowler (25). London Ryan's, 8.30pm, last two Wednesdays monthly. £6/£4

III FM
Monthly experimental music and noise event broadcast via net radio. With Vomir, Fecalove, Mutant Ape, Content Nullity and a DJ set from Second Layer Records. London The Others, 5 November, 8pm, free. illfm net

Interlace
Irregular concert series at Goldsmiths featuring John White, Sylvia Hallett, Thomas Kumlehn, Jerry Wigens, Walter Cardew, John Lely and more (31 October). Jennifer Allum, Philip Somervell & Daichi Yoshikawa, Paul Abbott, Ute Kanngiesser & Sebastian Lexer, Marjolaine Charbin and Grundik Kasyansky & Guillaume Viltard (21 November). London Goldsmiths Great Hall, 7pm, £6. interlace incalcando com

Kemmer Kieng
Contemporary classical, electronic and improvised music with jazz ensemble Outhouse, plus performances of music by Pierre Alexandre Tremblay, Atau Tanaka, Bruno Mederna, Kurt Schwitters and Georges Aperghis. London Cafe Oto, 24 November, 8.30pm, £5

Klinker Kings Cross
London free music institution goes central. With Spirals, Noah Fizz, The Three Skins (5 November). London Cross Kings, first and third Thursdays monthly, 9pm, £5/£3. klinkerzoundz com

Klinker South
Klinker below the river. With Rabbit, Peter Rockmount, Alan Simmons and Martin Hackett & Friends. London Ivy House, 4 November (first Wednesday monthly), 8.30pm, £5/£3. klinkerzoundz com

Klinker Tottenham
Klinker s North London outpost. With Gus Garside & Dan Powell, Brazil Nuts (3 November), Nought, Ampersand, Matt Scott s Squeeze Box Juke Box (13), Tom James Scott, Nicky Heinen, Stephen Flinn & Ute Kanngiesser (17), Roshi Nasehi, Ollie Brice & Seth Bennett, Stefen Keune & Javier Carmona (27). London Tottenham Chances, every Tuesday, plus second and fourth Fridays monthly, 8.30pm, £5/£3. klinkerzoundz com

London Improvisers Orchestra
Monthly meeting and performance for London s free musicians. London Cafe Oto, 1 November, 8pm, £6, cafeoto co uk

Lost & Found Department
Monthly leftfield pop night with a live performance from Player Piano. London The Bird Cage, 14 November, 8pm, £5

Mopomose
Improv staple this month participating in London Jazz Festival. With Lawrence Casserley & Adam Linson, Alex Maguire & Simon Picard, Claudia Binder Trio, Fillario Farinoppo and John Russell/Roger Turner. London Vortex, 15 November (third Sunday monthly), 6.30pm, £10/£8, mopomoso com

Numbers
Glasgow s underground club event, now bi-monthly with live performances from Rustle and Lazer Sword, plus Numbers resident DJs. Glasgow Sub Club, 6 November, 11pm, £10, myspace.com/numbers12345678

On The Edge
Improvised and leftfield music from Stefan Keune & John Russell, Chris Parfitt & Chris Cooke and residents The Wildcard Quartet. Brighton Open House Pub, 25 November (last Wednesday monthly), 8.30pm, £6/£5, myspace com/safehousebrighton

Out Here
King s Place s weekly music series. With Richard Hynes and Carl Rosman (2 November), Oto Projects presenting Sounds From The Japanese Underground with Tori & Reiko Kudo and more (9), Ioana Petcu-Colan and Micheal McHale (16), The Sound Alchemists and Vocal Motion Singers (23). London King s Place, every Monday, 8pm, £9.50, kingsplace co uk

Necluse
Monthly electroacoustic night with live performances from Ismaj Dur, Andy Nice and Rocketnumbernine, plus DJ sets and visuals. London Flea Pit, 5 November, 8pm, £3, necluse01 com

Seeds & Bridges
Jazz rley French's irregular concert series returns with an afternoon featuring Patrick Farmer, Sarah Hughes, Shayla Reynolds and French. Hull Holy Trinity Church, 7 November, 12pm, free, seedsandbridges blogspot com

Spirit Of Grevity
Electronic and leftfield music with Ryan Jordan, **K and Den Powell & Gus Garside. Brighton Komedia Studio Bar, 16 November, 8.30pm, £5/£4. spiritofgravity com

Trouble Tune
The Southbank s regular experimental strand hosts a London Jazz Festival special with Bass Clef, Jason Yarde and Shabaka Hutchings, plus a programme of digital media. London Royal Festival Hall Ballroom, 22 November, 3pm, free. southbank centre co uk

Type & Slowfoot Present
A monthly showcase of experimental music this time with electronic jazz trio Crackle, plus Grasscut and Sculpture. Brighton The Basement, 19 November, 8pm, £6/£5, slowfoot co uk

Out There items for inclusion in the December issue should reach us by Thursday 19 October. Send info to: Listings, *The Wire*, 23 Jack s Place, 6 Corbet Place, London E1 6NN, UK; fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011; mail listings@thewire co uk

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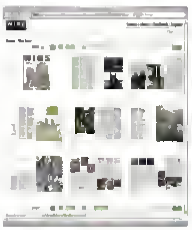

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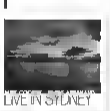

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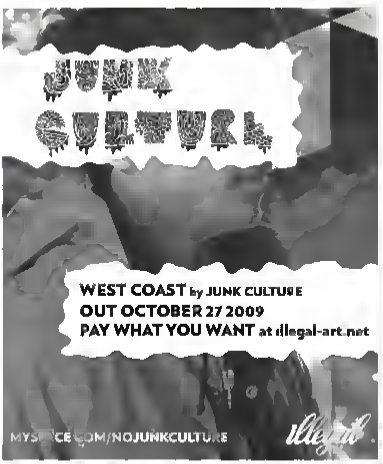

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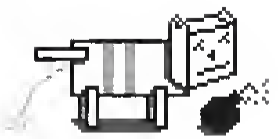

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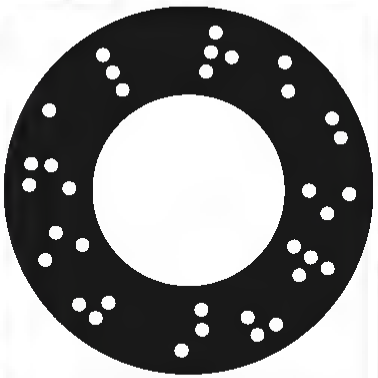

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***Below The Radar 1* Issue 307 September 2009**
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***The Wire Tapper 1* Issue 170 April 1998**
Vega/Vanio/Vaisanen, Mass, Microstoria, Mike Ink, dj-(cut) dh Vs Scanner, Scala, Cornelius, Pooddleus, Nessim, Meakuf Selex, Kreidler, Dj Food Vs David Byrne, Arto Lindsay, Schneider TM, Porter Ricks, Midnight Funk Association, Mimi, 2nd Gen

***The Wire Tapper 2* Issue 177 November 1998**
Slicker, Rhys Chatham, Angela Jaeger & David Cunningham, DAF, Tom Zé, Mandlem (Percy Howard/Fred Frith/Bill Laswell/Charles Hayward), Jane Dowe & Terre Thaemlitz, Tarwater, Powerfield, Sam Prekop, Puppy, Jad Fair & Yo La Tengo, The Pastels, Badawi, Labradford

***The Wire Tapper 3* Issue 182 April 1999**
Supersilent, High Rise, Rothko, We, Gas, Te Recoca Rot, Thurston Moore/Evan Parker/Walter Prati, Model 500, Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, Khan, Hood, Paul Panhuysen, Robert Ashley, Sheila Chandra, Vert, Rhys Chatham

***The Wire Tapper 4* Issue 186 August 1999**
EX Ranfomiz, Pierre Bastien and Pan American & BJ Cole, Vandermark 5, SS+D, Alog, Powerfield, Low Res, Chief Bassoio & His Brain Men, Clive Graham, De Mole Say Think, Warn Defever, Signal, Klangstabil, Unit, Daniel Figgis

***The Wire Tapper 5* Issue 193 March 2000**
Labradford, Stephen Vitiello, Vainio/Vaisanen/Einheit, Kimmo Pohjonen, Wire, Stylus, John Wall, Carl Duca, Fennesz/O Rambo/Rehberg, I'm Sore Vs Noise Camp, Daniel Givens, Arne Nordheim, Yo La Tengo, Vert, Aesop Quartet, Mira Calix, Fushitsusha

***The Wire Tapper 6* Issue 200 October 2000**
CD1, The Fall, Flanger, Susumu Yokota, Ran Blake, Christian Marclay, Otomo Yoshihide, Sensational, General Magic, Pan Sonic, Jan Jelinek, pole_z, HIM, David Grubbs, The Hurricane+1, Angus MacLise, Glass Cage, CD 2, Nurse With Wound, Faust, John Fahey, Nils Økland, Coil, Janek Schaefer, Current Ninety Three, Djivan Gasparyan, Peanut Butter Wolf featuring Rasco, I Sound, BiTTen c & u-(cut) dh, C-Schulz & Hajsch, Tom Recchion, Plurimon, Hermann Nitsch

***The Wire Tapper 7* Issue 207 May 2001**
Euro Tet, Pulseprogramming, Daniel Figgis, Jin Hi Kim, Kim Hiorthøy, Antibalas Afrobeat Orchestra, Bigg Jus, Nolte, Steinbruchel, Mice Parade, Illusion Of Safety, Monks Of The Monastery Of Gyütö, Tibet, Eardrum, Lasse Marhaug, Maz Nagl/Edward Carey feat Julie Tippetts

***The Wire Tapper 8* Issue 219 January 2002**
23 Skidoo, Jah Wobble & Temple Of Sound, Cornelius, Eug, Goodheart Allen Powell Trio, Chas Smith, Michael Jon Fink, Morcof, Electrelane, No Neck Blues Band, Set Fire To Flames, Workshop, Small Rocks, The Flip, Off Artist, Noxagt, Xink Supreme

***The Wire Tapper 9* Issue 225 November 2002**
CD 1, Liars, Themselves, Tarwater, Mnm, Badawi, Suicide, Supersilent, Polwechsel/Fennesz, Wazahugy, Asa Chang & Junray, Deadbeat, Vadis, The Oxes, Sagan, Leafcutter John, Sun, CD 2, Max Tundra, Wire, Sonic Youth/ICP/The Ex, Sigur Rós, John Fahey, A Small Good Thing, The Sea And Cake, Masha Qrella, Dictaphone, Pulseprogramming, Electrelane, Ellery Eskelin with Andrea Parkins & Jim Black, Jimmy Lyons Trio, Amon Tobin, D Arcangelo, *Currently unavailable*

***The Wire Tapper 10* Issue 236 October 2003**
CD 1, Guido Mobius, Alias, Animal Collective, Meher Shalal Hash Baz, Sketch Show, Kim Hiorthøy, Mice Parade, Colleen, Themselves, Loren Connors & David Grubbs, Palms Palps, Faust & Dälek, Four Tet, Rob Ellis, David Sylvian, CD 2, Heat Sensor featuring M Sayyid, Günter Müller & Toshimaru Nakamura, Staffan Håkan, Schlammpeitziger, Jah Wobble, Laibach, Lumen, Satoru Wono, Ui, Erik Friedlander, Suzanne And The Magical Band, Clegg, Sager & Swing, Schniposcomaultshop, David Grubbs

***The Wire Tapper 11* Issue 244 June 2004**
To Rococo Rot, Icarus, Joana Molina, Wibutee, Philip Clemo, Albert Ayler, Chris McGregor & The Brotherhood Of Breath, Matthew Dear, Jah Wobble, Arthur Russell, Henrik Rylander, Green Milk From The Planet Orange, Mountains, Skewbow, Un Caddie Renversé Dans l'Herbe, pole_z & Phil Minton

***The Wire Tapper 12* Issue 250 December 2004**
CD 1, Daniel Blm & Rob Palmer, Sithead, Bark Psychosis, Ateleia & David Daniell, Andy Moor & Yannis Kyriakides, Burnt Friedman & The Nu Dub Players, Aesop Rock, Pita, Violet, Michaela Melián, Chas Smith, Martin Archer, Henry Grimes Trio, The Necks, C, Accelera, Matthew Bortner, Stéphane Rives, Ergo Phizmiz, The Fall, CD 2, Cul De Sac & Damo Suzuki, Meadow House, Milky Globe, Staalplaat Soundsystem, Jason Kahn & Gunter Muller, Andrew Pekler, Carter Tutti, Dj Rupture featuring Sister Nancy, Burnt Sugar Vs The Dominatrix Am/Pm, David Grubbs & Nikos Veliotis, Gary Lucas & Jozef Van Wissem, Bonnie Prince Billy & Matt Sweeney, Damon & Naomi, Fox & Alex Ayuli, Ana Da Silva, Christian Renou, Enigma Device, Shlang, MBentley

***The Wire Tapper 13* Issue 256 June 2005**
Hanna Hukkelberg, Mandarin Movie, Alexander Hacke, Matt Elliott, Juana Molina, Picastro, Devistionists, Kid606, Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti, John Sarmen, Nick Castro, Junkboy, Akineri, Currituck Co, Bombay 1 Pay, Crimatise Orchestra, Part-Payal, Fovea Hex, Tu M

***The Wire Tapper 14* Issue 262 December 2005**
Oren Marshall, Dirty Projectors, Secret Mommy, Cage, Ray Russell, Kieran Hebden & Steve Reid, Black To Comm, Cobra Killer, Gerry Mitchell & Little Sparta, Xxl Merz, Hans Ejdlestad, Nels Cline/Wally Shoup/Chris Corsano, Andrey Kiritchenko, This Heat, Mohe

***The Wire Tapper 15* Issue 268 June 2006**
Humcrush, Leafcutter John, Machinefabriek, Reverbaphon, Yannis Kyriakides & Andy Moor, Jozef Van Wissem, Hwyl Nofio, Giuseppe Ielasi, Gerritt & John Wiese, Dub Trio, Izu, Moken, Lawrence English & Ai Yamamoto, Herbert, Sol Sleppy, Trevor Watts, Gnod, Spooncurve, Ienaj Dul, Det Gamla Landet

***The Wire Tapper 16* Issue 274 December 2006**
Drone Spiderhead, Dave Phillips, Alan Vega, Philip Kinstein, Carter Tutti, radicalfashion, Walter & Sakrnne Xela, Kotra & Zavoloka, Panasonic, Huntsville, Fluorescent Grey, Derek Bailey, Trilipomenia, Dave Swain, eMute, Celifone, Inch time, White Magic, The Slits, Anthony Kelly & David Stalling

***The Wire Tapper 17* Issue 279 May 2007**
Eglantine Gouzy, Langstone, A Hawk And A Hacksaw & The Hun Hangár Ensemble, Jonny I, Kammerflimmer Kollektief, Bodan Von Stolenfed, Pomassl, Throbbing Gristle, Alfred 23 Harth, Fred Anderson & Harrison Bankhead, Erifge, Jack Rose & Glenn Jones, Husky Rescue, Simon Bookish, Venus Bogardus, Tonesucker, stimulus, Zelienople, Ken Ikeda

***The Wire Tapper 18* Issue 284 October 2007**
Automated Acoustics, Strings Of Consciousness, John Luther Adams, hamaYöko, The Focus Group, Cath & Phil Tyler, The Ex & Getatchew Mekuria & Guests, Modified Toy Orchestra, Herbert Fried, the fun years, Damon & Naomi, Gentlepal, Icarus, Terentel, Behis, Luciano Cilio, Holk, Dimension X, Mordant Music

***The Wire Tapper 19* Issue 290 April 2008**
One Sleepless Forest, Snorkel, Nice Mohly, G F Fitz Gerald & Lol Coxhill, X A Cute feat Mike Ladd, Daniel Figgis via Somedrone, Fluorescent Grey, Kaffe Matthews, Alexei Borisov & Anton Nikkilä, Talvin Singh, Illusion Of Safety, The Master Musicians Of Hop Frog, Phog Masheen, Setsuban Bean Unit, Pink Skull, LowDynamicOrchestra with Stefano Scodanibbio, Lars Akerlund, Tangtype, Yellow6, Never Enough Hope

***The Wire Tapper 20* Issue 296 October 2008**
Mike Osborne, Zavoloka, Greis, Franck, Pantaleimon, micronemons, Anthony Kelly & David Stalling, Wounded Knee, oRSo, rarescale, Crackle, McHel Fornication, Paavoharju, Tertenn Qnld, A_dontigny, Richard J Vales, Lothar Ohlmeier/Isambard Khroustaliov, Random Touch

***The Wire Tapper 21* Issue 302 April 2009**
Robert Logan, Shogun Kunitoki, Jono El Grande, Sweet Billy Pilgrim, Jim McAuley (with Nels Cline), Hugemes Hogemes, Barbara Morgenstern, Whirling Hall of Knives, Animal Hospital, Violet, Andrea Loo, Felix Kubin, Shark Anorak & Weasel Walter Duo, Streifenjunko, Tony Bevan / Chris Corsano / Dominic Lash, Pekka Aaskinen, David Åhlén, Jez riley French, Them Use Them, Laura Toxvaerd, Hitoshi Kojo

***The Wire Tapper 22* Issue 308 October 2009**
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Epiphanies

Susan Stenger's transistor radio provided her with a conduit to other musical worlds, placing her in touch with John Cage, Gordon Mumma, David Tudor and Phill Niblock

Susan Stenger, preparing for communion with the avant garde

Come with me baby *I'll show ya the stars*
Down the dirt road to Epiphony, baby
To the holy, the holy cross
Take my hand, come with me baby
I'll show ya the real life
Come on now, I'll show ya show ya the real life
Down Epiphany way
Alan Vega, *Soundtrack For An Exhibition*

May 1963. According to Catholic doctrine, at eight years old I had reached the age of reason. I could understand right from wrong and (having confessed my sins) was in a State of Grace, ready to experience the Sacred Mystery of Transubstantiation – my First Holy Communion. As I stood in line at the back of Most Holy Redeemer Church in Buffalo, New York, itching to get home and out of my white lace dress and veil, I had plenty of time to wonder whether I would feel any difference once I had received the Sacrament. Although I was more than eager for a spiritual jolt, the answer was, essentially, no.

Back at the house, I unwrapped my presents. Amidst the traditional items – prayer book, rosary, white gloves – was a treasure: my very own transistor radio. It was a perfect secular counterpart to the events of the day – a portal to a whole new world, full of stories and sounds that I found utterly spellbinding. Suddenly my fire was well and truly lit. I could feel that little tongue of flame over my head, like the ones used in illustrations to represent the Holy Spirit.

Up until then my fantasies had tended to involve cowboys or martyred saints and my musical universe had consisted of a few family 45 rpms, my great-grandfather's repertoire of Scottish ditties (two Harry Lauder songs, sung with great gusto and loose dentures), the occasional improvisation on my grandparents' piano, and the constant, comforting backdrop of Frank Sinatra and friends that my mother dialled up every day in the kitchen. But this lovely new conjuring tool was all mine. I slept with it under my pillow and spent hours every day scanning the airwaves, hoping for that thrill, that shiver of surprise and pleasure and sometimes danger: that 'thrum' of recognition when I heard something new that vibrated with a strange familiarity. 'This means something to me. I am a member of this tribe.' It was my first awareness of what I suppose could be called a sense of aesthetic identity. On the long, meandering path I've taken from there to here, I have had countless moments like this. To anyone else they might seem incongruous and unrelated. To me, there is a strong connecting thread – I'm drawn to what seems purely itself, to what resonates with its own essence.

In high school in the 70s I had moved on from Bo Diddley, Johnny Cash, Dusty Springfield, The Animals, and The Stones to include Alan Lomax field recordings, Jethro Tull flute riffs (I had by now been playing flute and guitar for several years) and the music of John Cage, Morton Feldman and Julius Eastman. I had sought out Petr Kotik as a flute teacher and my whole world opened up again in the summer of 1973 when I attended Kotik's New Music in New Hampshire summer workshop in Chocorua. It was an amazing experience – the faculty included Kotik, Eastman, David Behrman, David Tudor, Gordon Mumma and Frederic Rzewski, and I also met Alvin Lucier, Christian Wolff, Phill Niblock and Tom Johnson. One of my chosen workshops was 'group composition' with Fred Rzewski. Paradoxically, the most profound lesson I learned there was to know when not to play. We also premiered Christian Wolff's *Changing The System*, which was another study in social interaction, with performance choices needing to change mid-stream, contingent on fellow players' decisions. Both experiences completely shaped the way I function in improvisatory situations.

David Tudor made a huge impression on me. Although I wasn't part of his group of students, I was fascinated with their activities. They essentially developed his piece *Rainforest* during these few weeks, collecting objects from local flea markets to resonate with sounds recorded in nearby fields and woods. The performance in the barn was magical; the objects were suspended from the rafters, making an unforgettable sculptural sound 'forest'. David was always to be found on the porch of the Inn in the evenings, drinking ouzo, telling stories and dispensing wisdom. He took us mushroom-hunting and showed me mountain sorrel, which sustained me several years later when I was stranded in the Appalachian Mountains without water. I shared a bill with him in the mid-80s, playing Cage and Wolff in the first half. He sat behind a chaotic-looking table full of electronics. In contrast to the typical 'this is the way my toys work' style of electronic music, he gave a virtuosic and absolutely disciplined performance. It was breathtaking. I encountered him once more on stage in 1992 when I joined The SEM Orchestra in a Carnegie Hall memorial concert for John Cage. David came out of retirement as a pianist to perform *Winter Music* with our *Atlas Eclipticalis*, and I had to keep reminding myself to play, so mesmerized was I by his brilliance and extreme focus.

By the late 1980s I was playing electric guitar with Rhys Chatham and composing and playing electric bass in Band Of Susans with Robert Poss and Ron Spitzer; my two oldest friends from Buffalo. Although a labelmate once referred to us as "uptown", I felt no conflict between my other musical activities and playing in a band. I remember clearly one 21 December we had a gig at CBGB's. After the soundcheck, I stopped home to pick up my flute and headed over to Phill Niblock's loft to play in his traditional six-hour winter solstice concert. He had made a flute piece for me, and I played that and several others, immersed in the sea of sound, drenched in combination and difference tones. About 10pm I rushed back to CBGB's for our set, euphoric and supercharged. It seemed like there was some kind of pulsing energy field connecting us directly to Phill's loft. The drones surged and the overtones flowed and it sounded like choirs of angels were singing backup. I looked down into the crowd and Arthur Russell was there at the edge of the stage, with a beatific smile on his face. It all made sense to me. ☐ The *Soundtrack For An Exhibition* catalogue, with contributions by Susan Stenger, is published by Forma Arts & Media.

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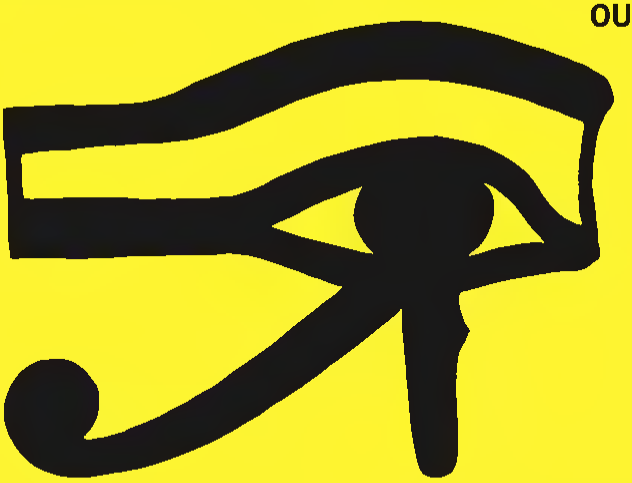

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